Preface

This book sketches out a “propaganda model” of the mass media in the United States. The democratic postulate is that the media are independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth, and that they do not merely reflect the world as powerful groups wish it to be perceived (pxi).

The special importance of propaganda in what Walter Lippmann referred to as “manufacture of consent” has long been recognized by writers on public opinion, propaganda, and the political requirements of the social order (pvi).

Lippmann himself, writing in the early 1920s, claimed that propaganda had already become a regular organ of popular government, and was steadily increasing in sophistication and importance. The propaganda function of the media is a very significant aspect of their overall service (pxi).

Institutional critiques such as presented in this book are commonly dismissed by establishment commentators as “conspiracy theories”, but that is merely an evasion. It is a guided market system that we describe in this book with the guidance provided by the government, the leaders of the corporate community, the top media owners and executives, and the assorted individuals and groups who are assigned or allowed to take constructive initiatives (pxii).

In most cases, media leaders do similar things because they wee the world through the same lenses. They maintain silence together in tacit collective action and leader-follower behavior. The mass media are not a solid monolith on all issues. But views that challenge fundamental premises will be excluded from the mass media even when elite controversy over tactics rages fiercely (pxii).

Elite disagreement over tactics is reflected in public debate, but the mass media, in conformity with elite priorities have coalesced in processing news in a way that fails to place U.S. policy into meaningful context, systematically supresses U.S. violence and agresssion, and distort public perceptions of reality . As Jacques Ellul writes: “The propagandist naturally cannot reveal the true intentions of the principal for whom he acts. That would be to submit the projects to public discussion, to the scrutiny of public opinion, and thus prevent their success. Propaganda must serve instead as a veil for such projects, masking the true intention (pxiii).

The power of government to fix frames of reference and agendas, and to exclude inconvenient facts from public inspection, is also impressively displayed in coverage of elections in Central America. When there is little or no dissent from a government policy, there may still be some slippage in the mass media, and facts that tend to undermine the government line, can be found, usually on the back pages of the newspapers (pxiv).

This is one of the strengths of the U.S. system. It is possible that the volume of inconvenient facts can expand, as it did during the Vietnam War, in response to the growth of a critical constituency. Even in this exceptional case, however, it was very rare for news and commentary to find thri way into the mass media if they failed to conform to the framework of established dogma (pxiv).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

With inconvenient facts allowed sparingly and within the proper framework of assumptions, it makes for a propaganda system that is far more credible and effective in putting over a patriotic agenda than one with official censorship (pxiv).

That the media provide some facts about an issue, however, proves absolutely nothing about the adequacy or accuracy of that coverage. The mass media literally suppress a great deal. But even more important than this context is the question of the attention given to fact (pxiv).

There is no merit to the pretense that because certain facts may be found in the media by a diligent and skeptical researcher, the absence of radical bias and de factor suppression is thereby demonstrated (pxv).

The public does not notice the silence on victims in client states, which is as important in supporting state policy as the concentrated focus on enemy victims. It would have been very difficult for the Guatemalan government to murder tens of thousands if the U.S. press had provided the kind of coverage that would have brought these atrocities to the forefront (pxv).

It would have been impossible to wage a brutal war against South Vietnam and the rest of Indochina if the media had not rallied to the cause (pxv).

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A Propaganda Model

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain and inform and to inculcate individuals with values, beliefs, codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society (p1),

In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda. In countries whre the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, it is clear that the media serve the ends of the dominant elite (p1).

It is much more difficult to see a propaganda system at work where the media are private and formal censorship is absent. This is especially true where the media actively portray themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest (p1).

A propaganda model focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter o ut the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests get their message across to the public (p2).

The essential ingredients of our propaganda model, or set of news "filters" fall under the following headings:

1. The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms.
2. Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media.
3. The reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power.
4. "flak" as a means of disciplining the media and…
5. "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism.

The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns (p2).

The elite domination of the media and marginalization of dissidents that results from the operation of these filters occurs so naturally that media news people, frequently operating with complete integrity and goodwill, are able to convince themselves that they shoose and interpret the news "objectively" and on the basis of professional news values (p2).

Within the limits of filter constraints they often are objective; the constraints are so powerful, and are built into the system in such a fundamental way, that alternative bases of news choices are hardly imaginable.

1.1. Size, Ownership, And Profit Orientation of the Mass Media: the first filter

In the first half of the nineteenth century a radical press emerged that reached a national working-class audience. This alternative press was effective in reinforcing class consciousness. It unified the workers because it fostered an alternative value system and framework for looking at the world (p3).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

This was deemed a major threat to the ruling elites. The result was an attempt to squelch the working-class media by libel laws and prosecutions. These coercive efforts were not effective, and by mid-century they had been abandoned in favor of the liberal view that the amrket would enforce responsibility (p3).
The market did accomplish what the state intervention failed to do. The expansion of the free market was accompanied by an "industrialization of the press". This trend toward greater integration of the media into the market system has been accelerated by the loosening of rules limiting media concentration, cross-ownership, and control by non-media companies (p8).
The greater profitability of the media in a deregulated environment has also led to an increase in takeovers and takeover threats, with even giants like CBS and Time, Inc., directly attacked or threatened. In addition to broad linkages, the large media companies also do business with commercial and investment bankers, obtaining lines of credit and loans (p10).
Large investors can make themselves heard, and their actions can affect the welfare of companies and their managers. General Electric has contributed to the funding of the American Enterprise Institute, a right-wing thinktank that supports intellectuals who will get the business message across (p12).
Another structural relationship of importance is the media companies' dependence on and ties with government. The radio-TV companies and netowrks all require government licenses and franchises and are thus potentially subject to government control or harassment (p13).
The media protect themselves from this contingency by lobbying and other political expenditures, the cultivation of political relationshps, and care in policy. In television, the revolving door flow of personnel between regulators and the regulated firms was massive during the years when the oligopolitistic structure of the media and networks was being established (p13).
The great media also depend on the government for more general policy support (p13).
The media giants, advertising agencies, and greate multinational corporations have a joint and close interest in a favourable climate for investment, and their interconnections and relationships with the government on these policies are symbiotic (p14).
The dominant media firms are quite large businessess. They are controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-orientated forces and they are closely interlocked. This is the first powerful filter that will affect news choices (p14).

The Advertising License to do Business: The second filter

Before advertising became prominent, the price of a newspaper had to cover the costs of doing business. With the growth of advertising papers that attracted ads could afford a copy price well below production costs. This put papers lacking in advertising at a serious disadvantage (p14).
An advertising-based system will tend to drive out of existence or into marginality the media companies that depend on revenue from sales alone. Even if ad-based media cater to an affluent, "upscale" audience, they easily pick up a large part of the "downscale" audience, and their rivals lose market share and are eventually driven out or marginalized (p15).
Advertising has played a potent role in increasing concentration. A market share and advertising edge on the part of one paper or television station will give it additional revenue to compete more effectively.

The disadvantaged rival must add expenses it cannot afford to try to setem the dwindling market share. This helps explain the death of many large-circulation papers and magazines and the attrition in the number of newspapers (p15).

Frojm the time of the introduction of press advertising, working-class and radical papers have been at a serious disadvantage. Their readers have tended to be of modest means, a factor that has always affected advertiser interest (p15).

Their readers are not purchasers, and any money thrown upon them is so much thrown away, as one advertising executive put it. Papers have been removed from mass circulation that would give the working class an alternative framework of analysis and understanding that contested the dominant systems of representation in both broadcasting and the mainstream press (p15).

A mass movement without any major media support, and subject to a great deal of active press hostility, suffers serious disability, and struggles against grave odds (p16).

Working-class and radical media also suffer from the political discrimination of advertisers. Many firms will refuse to patronize ideological enemies and those who they perceive as damaging their interests. Advertisers also choose selectively among programs on the basis of their own principles. With rare exceptions these are culturally and politically conservative (p17).

Large corporate advertisers on television will rarely sponsor programs that engage in serious criticisms of corporate activities, such as the problem of environmental degredation, the workings of the military-industrial complex, or corporate support of Third World tyrannies (p17).

Television networks learn over time that such programs will not sell and would have to be carried at financial sacrifice, and that they may offend powerful advertisers. An advertising-based media system will gradually increase advertising time and marginalize or eliminate altogether programming that has significant public-affairs content (p17).

Advertisers will want, more generally, to avoid programs with serious c o mplexitites and disturbing controversies that interfere with the “buying mood”. They seek programs that will lightly entertain and thus fit in with the spirit of the primary purchase of program purchases - the dissemination of a selling message (p17).

Advertisers prefer programs on Greek antiques, the ballet, and items of cultural and national history nostalgia. Television stations and networks are also concerned to maintain audience “flow” levels i.e., to keep people watching from program to program, in order to sustain advertising ratings and revenue (p18).

Sourcing Mass-Media News: The Third Filter

The media need a steady, reliable flow of the raw material of news. Economics often dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs. The White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department, in Washington D.C. are central nodes of such news activity (p19).

On a local basis, city hall and police departments are the subject of regular news “beats” for reporters. These bureaucracies turn out a large volume of material that meets the demands of news organizations for reliable, scheduled flows (p19).

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Government and corporate sources have the great merit of being recognizable and credible by their status and prestige. Therefore, newsworkers are predisposed to treat bureacratic accounts as factual. In particular, a newsworker will recognize an official's claim to knowledge as not merely a claim, but as a credible competent piece of knowledge (p19).
This amounts to a moral division of labor: officials have and give the facts; reporters merely get them. Another reason for the heavy weight given to official sources is that the mass media claim to be "objective" dispensers of the news (p19).
It is also a matter of cost. Taking information from sources that may be presumed credible reduces investigative expenses whereas material that will elicit criticism or threats, requires careful checking and costly research (p19).
Only the corporate sector has the resources to produce public information and propaganda on the scale of the Pentagon and other government bodies. Besides the U.S. chamber of commerce, there are thousands of commerce and trade associations also engaged in public relations and lobbying activities (p21).
To consolidate their preeminent position as sources, government and business-news producers go to great pains to make things easy for media organizations. In effect, the large bureaucracies of the powerful subsidize the mass media, and gain special access by their contribution to reducing the media's costs in acquiring material for news (p22).
It should be noted that in the case of the largesse of the Pentagon and the State Department's offic of Public Diplomacy, the subsidy is at the taxpayers' expense, so that, in effect the citizenry pays to be propagandized in the interest of powerful groups such as military contractors and other sponsors of state terrorism (p22).
The media may feel obligated to carry extremely dubious stories and mute criticism in order not to offend their sources and disturb the close relationship. It is very difficult to call authorities on whom one depends for daily news liars, even if they tell whoppers (p22).
Critical sources may be avoided not only because of their lesser availability and higher cost of establishing credibility, but also because the primary sources may be offended and may even threaten the media using them (p22).
Powerful sources may also use their prestige and importance to the media as a lever to deny critics access to the media. Powerful sources also regularly take advantage of media routines and dependency to "manage" t he media, to manipulate them into following a special agenda and framework (p23).
Part of this management process consists of inundating the media with stories, which serve sometimes to foist a particular line and frame on the media. This strategy can be traced back at least as far as the Committeee on Public Information, established to coordinate propaganda during World War I (p23).
During the 1970s and early 1980s a st ring of institutions was created to the end of propagandizing the corporate viewpoint. The funding and pushing of their ideology catapulted experts into the press. The mass media themselves provide "experts" who regularly echo the official view. By giving t hese purveyors of the preferred view a great deal of exposure, the media confer status and make them the obvious candidates for opinions and analysis (p24).

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Another class of experts whose prominance is largely a function of serviceability to power is former radicals who have come to "see the light". In a country whose cit izenry values acknowledgement of sin and repentence, the turncoats are an important class of repentant sinners (p25).
It is interesting to observe how the former sinners, whose previous work was of little interest or an object of ridicule by the mass media, are suddenly elevated to prominance and become authentic experts. During the McCarthy era, defectors and ex-Communists vied with one another in tales of the imminence of a Soviet invasion and other lurid stories (p25).
The steady flow of ex-radicals from marginality to media attention shows that we are witnessing a durable method of providing experts who will say what the establishement wants said.

Flak and the Enforcers: The fourth filter

"Flak" refers to negative responses to a media statement or program. It may take the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, law-suits, speeches and bills before Congress, and other modes of complaint, threat and punitive action (p26).
If flak is produced on a large scale, or by individuals or groups with substantial resources, it can be both uncomfortable and costly to the media. Positions have to be defended within the organization and without, sometimes before legislatures and possibly even the courts (p26).
Advertisers are concerned to avoid offending constituencies that may produce flak, and their demand for suitable programming is a continuing feature of the media environment. If certain kinds of fact, position, or program are thought likely to elicit flak, this prospect can be a deterrent (p26).
The ability to produce flak, and especially flak that is costly and threatening, is related to power. Serious flak has increased in close parallel with business's growing resentment of media criticism and the corporate offensive of the 1970s and the 1980s (p26).
Along with its other political investments of the 1970s and 1980s, the corporate community sponsored the growth of flak-producing institutions. Although the flak machines steadily attack the mass media, the media treat them well. They receive respectful attention, and their propagandistic role and links to a larger corporate program are rarely mentioned (p28).
The producers of flak add to one another's strenght and reinforce the c ommand of political authority in its news-management activities. The government is a major producer of flak, regularly assailing, threatening and "correcting" the media, trying to co ntain any deviations from the established line (p28).
News management itself is designed to produce flak. In the Reagan years, Mr Reagan was put on television to exude charm to millions, many of whom berated the media when they dared to criticize the "Great Communicator" (p28).

Anticommunism as a control mechanism

A final filter is the ideology of anticommunism. Communism as the ultimate evil has always been a specter haunting property owners, as it threatens the very root of their class position and superior status (p29).

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The well-publiicized abuses of Communist states have contributed to elevating opposition to communism to a first rate principle of Western ideology and politics. This ideology helps mobilize the populace against an enemy, and because the concept is fuzzy it can be used against anybody advocating policies that threaten property interests (p29).
It therefore helps fragment the left and labor movements and serves as a political-control mechanism. If the triumph of communism is the worst imaginable result, the support for fascism abroad is justified as a lesser evil. Opposition to social democrats who are too soft on communists and "play into their hands" is rationalized in similar terms (p29).
Liberals at home, often accused of being pro-Communist or insufficiently anti-Communist, are kept continuously on the defensive in a cultural milieu in which anti-communism is the dominant religion. Most of them have have fully internalized the religion anyways, but they are all under great pressure to demonstrate their anti-Communist credentials (p29).
It should be noted that when anti-Communist fervor is aroused, the demand for serous evidence in support of claims of "communist" abuses is suspended. Defectors, informers, and assorted other opportunists move to center stage as "experts". And they remain there even after exposure as highly unreliable, if not downright liars (p30).
The anti-Communist control mechanism reaches through the system to exercise a profound influence on the mass media. Issues tend to be framed in terms of a dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers. The ideology and religion of anticommunism is a potent filter (p31).

Dichotomization and Propaganda Campaigns

The five filters narrow the range of news that passes through the gates, and even more sharply limit what can become "big news". By definition, news from primary establishment sources meets one major filter requirement and is readily accommodated by the mass media (p31).
The result is the same as if a commisar had in structed the media to "concentrate on the victims of enemies and forget about the victims o f friendly powers" (p32). Reports of the abuses of worthy victims not only pass through the filters; they also become the basis of sustained propaganda campaigns (p32).
If the government or the corporate community and the media feel that a story is useful as well as dramatic, they focus on it intensely and use it to enlighten the public (p32).
Propaganda campaigns have been closely attuned to the elite's interests. Also, propaganda campaigns will not be mobilized where victimization fails to meet the test of utility to elite interests. Propaganda campaigns on behalf of victims of friendly powers would conflict with elite interests and, in our model, would not be able to apss through the filtering system (p33).
The mass media will allow any stories that are hurtful to large interests to peter out quickly, if they surface at all. For stories that are sueful, the process will get under way with a series of government leaks, press conferences, white papers etc. or with one or more of the mass media starting the ball rolling (p34).
Flak will tend to press the mass media to greater hysteria in the face of enemy evil. The media not only suspend critical judgement and investigative zeal, they compete to find ways of putting the newly established truth in a supportive light (p34).
Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

Themes and facts that are incompatible with the now institutionalized theme are suppressed or ignored. If the theme collapses of its own burden of fabrications, the mass media will quietly fold their tents and move to another topic (p34).

We should expect great investigatory zeal in the search for enemy villainy and the responsiblility of high officials for abuses in enemy states, but diminished enterprise in examining such matters in connectioin with one's own friendly states (p35).

Worth victims will be featured prominently and dramatically, they will be humanized, and their victimization will receive the detail and context in story construction that will generate reader interest and sympathetic emotion (p35).

In contrast, unworthy victims will merit only slight detail, minimal humanization, and little context that will excite and enrage (p35).

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Worthy and Unworthy Victims

The evidence of victim worth may be read from the extent and character of attention and indignation. The U.S. mass media's practical definition of worth are political in the extreme and fit well the expectations of a propaganda model (p37).

While this differential treatment occurs on a large scale, the media, intellectuals and public are able to remain unconscious of the fact and maintain a high moral and self-righteous tone. This is evidence of an extremely effective propaganada system (p37).

Jerzy Popieluszko versus a hundred religious victims in Latin America

A useful comparison can be made between the mass media's treatment of Jerzy Popieluszko, a polish priest murdered by the polish police in October 1984, and the media's coverage of priests murdered within the U.S. sphere of influence. In our model, Popieluszko, murdered in an enemy state, will be a worthy victim, whereas prists murdered in the client states of Latin America will be unworthy. The former may be expected to elicit a propaganda outburst by the mass media while the latter will not generate sustained coverage (p38).

The coverage of Popieluszko's murder not only dwarfs that of the unworthy victims, it constitutes a major episode of news management and propaganda. Nothing comparable can be found for victims within the free world (p38).

The Popieluszko case appeared on the front page of the New York Times on ten occassions. The intensity of the coverage assured that its readers would know who popieluszko was, that he had been murdered, and that this sordid violence had occurred in a communist state (p38).

In contrast, the public would not have seen mention of the names of literally dozens of other religious murder victims in the Latin American provinces, who were sometimes given substantial coverage in the local press of the countries in which the murders took place (p38).

In fact, none of the extremely prominent victims of murder in Latin America, including Archbishop Romero and the four American churchwomen, received anywhere near as much attention accorded to Popieluszko (p39).

While the coverage of the worthy victim was generous with gory details and quoted expressions of outrage and demand for justice, the coverage of he unworthy victims was low-keyed, designed to keep the lid on emotions and evoking regretful and philosophical generalities (p39).

Ten front-page articles on Popieluszko is a statement about importance, as is the fact of th ree editorials denouncing the Poles, without a single editorial denunciation for the murderers of the unworthy victims. Coverage of the worthy victim exceeded that of the entire set of one hundred unwrothy victims taken together (p39).

The claim is sometimes made that unworthy victims are so treated by the U.S mass media because they are killed at a great distance, and are so unlike ourselves that they are easy to disregard. Poland, however, is farther away than central America, and its cultural and business links with the United States are not as great as those of Latin American countries in general (p39).

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Three of the religious victims among the twenty three murdered in Guatemala were American citizens, a consideration that failed to light a fire under the media. Almost every murder of the Latin American victims was carried out by official or paramilitary forces in crimes that were never investigated or prosecuted under law (p42).

Coverage of the Popieluszko case

Jerzy Popieluszko was an activist priest and a strong supporter of the Solidarity movement in Poland. In an effort to eliminate him, members of the Polish secret police abducted him . He was beaten, bound and gag ged, and eventually thrown in a reservoir. His body was found several days later (p42).
The quality of coverage was also extremely well designed to score political points, and contrasts sharply with the quality of coverage of unworthy victims. The coverage of the Popieluszko murder was notable for the fullness of the details regarding his treatment by the police and the condition of the recovered body (p42).
What is more, these details were repeated at every opportunity. At the trial, the emotional strain and guilt manifested by the police officers was described time and time again. Numerous unflattering photos of the policemen on trial were presented, adding dramatic details in support of the image of police visciousness (p43).
Popieluszko was humanized, with descriptions of his physical characteristics and personality that made him into something more than a distant victim. The act of violence and its effects on Popieluszko were presented in such a way as to generate the maximum emotional impact on readers. The acts against unworthy victims were also vicious, but they were treated very differently (p43).
The net effect of this day-in-day-out repetition of outrage and indignation was to call very forcible attention to a terrible injustice, to put the polish government on the defensive, and , probably, to contribute to remedial action (p43).
In article after article, the U.S. media raised the question: how high up was the act known and approved? The search was on for responsibility at the top (p43).

Rutilio Grande and the unworthy seventy two

The murder of one of the seventy-two, Father Rutilio Grande was an important landmark in the escalation of violence in El Salvador. Rutilio Grande was a Jesuit, the pastor of Auilares, and a progressive who helped organize peasants in self-help groups (p46).
He was strongly opposed by the local landlords, the police, and the military commanders, but he was a national figure in the Salvadoran church and was a friend of the archbishop. According to a church autopsy, the bulletes that riddled the priest were the same caliber as the Manzer guns used by the police (p46).
Archbishop Romero wrote to the president of El Salvador urging a thorough investigation, which was promised. The dramatic acts carried out to try to mobilize support in the church's self-defense were subject to a virtual balckout in the U.S. mass media (p47).

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Archbishop Oscar Romero

The murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the highest Catholic church official in El Salvador was "big news", and its political implications were enormous. Romero had been placed on a right-wing death list and received threats from the right-wing, which from the beginning had been closely linked to the army and intelligence services (p48).

The Carter administration had been so disturbed by Romero's opposition to its policies that it secretly lobbied the ope to curb the archbishop. The U.S. media's news coverage of the archbishop's murder reflected well his threatening role, reaching new levels of dishonesty and propaganda (p48).

Details of the murder and the public response

The details of the Romero murder provided by the U.S. mass media were consise. While therre were expressions of shock and distress, there were very few quotations and expressions of outrage by supporters of Romero (p48).

There were no statements or quotations suggesting that the murder was intolerable and that the guilty must be found and brought to justice. The New York Times had no editorial condemning, or even mentioning, the murder (p48).

It was quickly placed in the larger framework of alleged killings by both the left and the right that were deeply regretted by Salvadoran and U.S. officials (p48).

The progadanda line: the reformist junta trying to contain the violence of right and left

The Salvadoran and U.S. governments contented at the time of Romero's murder that the killing going on in El Salvador was being done by extremists on the right and the left, not by the Salvadoran armed forces and their agents (p49).

And that the government was trying its best to contain the killings and carry out reforms. John Bushness of the State Department, stated before a House appropriations committee that "therre is some misperception by those who fillow the press that the government is itself repressive in El Salvador" and that only "the smallest part" of the killings come from the army and security forces. This statement was a knowing lie, contradicted by all independent evidence coming out of El Salvador and refuted by Archbishop Romero on an almost daily basis (p49).

And Romero explained to Carter that the idea that the junta was reformist was a myth, that "neither the junta nor the Christian Democrats govern the country", but, rather, power is in the hands of the army, serving itself and the oligarchy (p49).

The government was not centrist and reformist – it was a military regime of the right, closely linked to the terrorist force ORDEN and the death squads, and it used them regularly as proxies. The paramilitary forces were not uncontrollable - they were dong what the army wanted them to do (p50).

The paramilitary did jobs for which the official forces wished to disclaim responsibility. The U.S. mass media had featured heavily the reformist charact er of the revolutionary junta, but they uniformly suppressed evidence of the powerlessness, frustraions and early resignation of the progressives. The Junta, according to the mass media, was a "weak centrist government beset by implacable extremes", not a right wing government of massacre (p51).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

The civilian lack of control had no effect on the way in which the news characterized the junta; it continued to be labelled as moderate. And the Salvadoran government has continued to be "moderate" and "centrist" up to today (p51).
Other media supressions aided in bolstering the myth of the neutral junta standing between the extreme right and extreme left.

Misrepresentation of Romero's views

Romero was unequivocal in laying the blam for the violence in El Salvador on the army and security forces, and he viewed the left and popular groupings as victims provoked into self-defense by violence and injustice (p53).
Romero's perception, essentially the same as that privately conveyed to the press by the U.S. government , was grossly falsified in public by both the government and the press.

The loss of interest in responsibility of the top

With Popieluszko, the media tried hard to establish that there was knowledge of and responsibility for the crime at higher levels of the Polish government. Soviet interest and possible involvement were also regularly invoked. With Romero, in contrast , no such questions were ever raised or pressed (p54).
The media failed to convey the depth of Romero's hostility towards U.S. policy. The media also suppressed Romero's appeal to the military to refuse to kill, a fact that would have made much clearer how strongly opposed he was to official policies (p55).
Although Romero was far and away the most important establishment figure aligned with the popular movements, the media pretended at first that the affiliation of his killers was a complete mystery. The reliable Duarte suggested that the killing was too professional to be indigenous – it must have been a contract job from the outside. This view was dutifully reported by the New York Times, Newsweek, and CBS news (p55).
When D'Aubuisson's link to the murder became public knowledge, the media failed to make this a big issue, and his close relations with the official forces were not examined or discussed. This is evidence of a propaganda system at work (p55).
Any possible U.S. connection to the crime was, of course, "far out" and could not be raised in the U.S. media. That we don't do this sort of thing is an ideological premise of the patriotic press, no matter what the facts of recent history tell us (p55).
Here the press cannot plead lack of knowledge. As later conceded, the media knew very well that the security forces were the source of the violence (p56).

Murder unavenged – or triumphant

The assassins of Archbishop Romero were never "officially" discovered or prosecuted, and he joined the ranks of the tens of thousands of other Salvadorans murdered without justice being done. But in contrast with Popieluszko, the U.S. mass media seemed quite uninterested in who committed the act or in demanding just retribution (p56).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

Subsequently, a great deal of evidence became available showing that Roberto D'Aubuisson was at the center of a conspiracy to murder Romero. The murder of Romero was planned and carried out by D'Aubuisson with the aid of former national guardsmen of Somoza (p57).
In short, there was substantial evidence concerning the identity of Romero's murderers, and there were significant links of the murders to the highest officials of the Salvadoran military establishment. There was undoubtedly a kind of conspiracy to cover up the murder from the very beginning (p57).
The murder was back-page material at best, treated matter-of-factly and never put in a framework of indignation and outrage by the use of emotive language or by asking allies of romero for comment on he evidence, and it never elictied strident demands for justice (p57).
The U.S. mass media gave little notice to the consolidation of the power of the extreme right, and the semi-official vindication of the murderers of Archbishop Romero. This was telling evidence about the nature of power in El Salvador, and the fictional quality of the claim that the government was centrist or reformist (p58).
As D'Aubuisson sought high office and eventually became president of the Salvadoran legislature, the U.S. mass media did not focus on his record as the probable organizer of the murder of Archbishop Romero and as the acknowledged leader of the death squads and a mass murderer (p58).
The U.S. government and the media understood very well that the violence was overwhelmingly the responsibility of both the U.S.-backed security forces and the paramilitary network they created to terrorize the population. But this truth was inexpressible (p59).

Coverage of the Salvadoran National Guards' Murder of the Four U.S. Churchwomen

On December 2, 1980, four U.S. churchwomen workin in El Salvador were seized, raped, and murdered by members of the Salvadoran National Guard. This crime was extremely inconvenient to the Carter administration, which was supporting the Salvadoran junta as an alleged "reformist" government (p59).
While temporarily suspending military aid to El Salvador, the Carter administration sought a quick and low-keyed resolution of the case. It resumed aid before there was any investigatory response by the Salvadoran government (p60).
With the arrival of the Reagan administration, the already badly compromised concern to find the culprits diminished further. It was quickly clear that the whole business could be forgotten – along with the thousands of Salvadorans already killed (p60).
Secretary of State Alexander Haig stated that the evidence "led one to believe" that the four women were trying to run a roadblock – a shameless lie that was soon acknowledged as such by the State Department. The Reagan ambassador to the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick, went one better, suggesting that the four women were political activists for the "Frente" – an outright lie hinting quite broadly that they were fair game (p60).
Although Kirkpatrick also asserted that the Salvadoran government "unequivocally" was "not responsible" for the murders, evidence was soon available that showed that members of the National Guard had killed the four women (p60).
The administation then moved to the position that it was clear that the local guardsmen had "acted alone". Because the women were American, both the Reagan administration and the Salvadoran military

were obligated to “see justice done” – in this one instance. It took three-and-a-half years for justice to triumph in this one case, with a lid still kept on top-level involvement (p61).

Details of the Savagery

The finding of Popieluszko’s body was front-page news for the New York Times. The details of his seizure, the disposition of his body, and the nature of his wounds were recounted extensively and with barely concealed relish (p61).

The finding of the bodies of the four women, by contrast, was a back-page item in the Times, and in all four of the media institutions the accounts of the violence done to the f our murdered women were very succinct, omitted many details, and were not repeated after the initial disclosures (p61).

No attempt was made to reconstruct the scene with its agony and brutal violence, so that the drama conveyed in the accounts of the Popieluszko murder was entirely absent. The murder of the four church women was made remote and impersonal (p61).

In the Popieluszko case, both the finding of the body and the trial were occassions for an aggressive portrayal of the details of the act of murder an the condition of the body. The mass-media reticence on such matters at the time of the finding of the bodies of the four women was exceeded by their restraint at the trial (p62).

Lack of indignation and insistent demands for justice

In the Popieluszko case, the press conveyed the impression of intolerable outrage and demanded rectification. In the case of he murder of the four American women, it was not declared as intolerable, and the media did not insist on justice (p63).

With Popieluszko, it was live government officials who committed the crime, not blind forces that are hard to bring to book. Even the funeral and memorial services for the women in the United States were ignored and suppressed (p63).

Nowhere in any articles was there a suggestion that the U.S.-backed government initiated and was doing the bulk of the murdering. In the case of Popieluszko, by contrast, the media never once suggested that he was a regrettable victim of escalating conflict between the state and rebellious forces (p63).

The lack of zeal in the search for villainy at the top

In the Popieluszko case, the mass media eagerly, aggressively, and on a daily basis sourght and pointed to evidence of top-level involvement in the killing. In the case of the killing of the four women, we can observe a completely different approach. Here the media found it extremely difficult to locate Salvadoran government involvement in the murders, even with evidence staring them in the face (p64). Their investigatory zeal was modest, and they were happy to follow the leads of “Trust me” US officials as the case unfolded. They played dumb. The Salvadoran army and security forces had been killing Salvadorans, in the same way they had killed the four women, for months (p64).

Local peasants had been forced to bury the bodies by the local military. But the media did not use this information to help them f ind the locus of the murders. The initial line of the U.S. and Salvadoran government was that thee was no proof of military involvement. A statement issued by the junta on December 8 claimed that the murderers were “terrorists of the extreme right” (p64).

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In keeping with the government line, twenty days after the murders, the New York Times still spoke only of “unidentified assailants”, although the leads to the National Guard were already plentiful. Gradually, so much evidence seeped out to show that the women had been murdered by members of the National Guard that the involvement of government forces could no longer be evaded (p64).

A two-part process of “damage limitation” ensured – one was the distinction between the government and the National Guard. In the Popieluszko case, the reader was never allowed to forget that the murdering police were part of the Polish government (p65).

in the case of the four American women, it was barely evident in the mass media that the killers had any connection with the Salvadoran government. This was in keeping with the basic myth that the Salvadoran government was reformist and centrist, trying to control killings by extremists on left and right (p65).

The most important goal of the immediate damage-containment process was to stifle any serious investigation of the responsiblility of the officials of the Salvadoran government. But there was little doubt that the responsibility for the crime went high (p65).

The U.S. official strategy, once it was clear that the National Guard was responsible for the killing, was to get the low-level killers tried and convicted while protecting “reformers” at the top. The official line was that t he local national guardsmen “were acting on their own”, although internal state department documents at the time recognized that the Salvadoran investigation had been a joke, and other evidence existeed suggesting top-level involvement (p65).

To go along with the official line, the mass media had to stop investigating high-level involvement and even to suppress evidence emerging from other sources. And so they proceeded to do this. In the Polish case, the evidence of top-level involvement was never forthcoming, but the issue was pursued by the U.S. mass media relentlessly (p66).

In the case of the four churchwomen, where the evidence of top-level involvement was abundant, the U.S. mass media failed to press the matter, or even to engage in the pursuit of obvious investigative leads. The mass media did once berate the Salvadoran government for “stonewalling” the investigation, but the media entirely failed to capturre the depth and scope of the stonewalling process (p66).

The extensive evidence concerning official Salvadoran refusals to take action or to interrogate relevant witnesses would have been aired with delight if applicable to the Polish investigation. The U.S. government also engaged in a systematic cover-up – of both the Salvadoran cover-up and the facts of the case (p68).

The U.S. mass media, while briefly noting the Salvadoran stonewalling, failed to call attention to the equally important lies and suppression of their own government. Carter and Reagan put protection of its client above the quest for justice for the four U.S. citizens murdered by agents of that government (p68).

U.S. officials reiterated that there was no reason to believe that higher-level officials knew about the crime or participated in it, when they had clear knowledge of a cover-up and a refusal to investigate. The state department also regularly lied about the thoroughness of the investigation (p68).

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A second form of official U.S. participation in the cover-up was a refusal to make public information on the Salvadoran investigation and evidence uncovered by the United States itself. The families of the victims and their attorneys regularly found the U.S government unwilling to release information on the case (p68).

The argument given was that the information was sensitive, and that releasing it would interfere with the legal process in El Salvador. The only plausible rationale for the U.S. cover-up is that the administration wanted to minimize adverse publicity concerning the performance of its murderous client (p69).

The administration hoped that the case would "go away", but until that happened, it wanted the publicity flow to be under its control. Part of the reason the administration wanted control was to allow it to claim progress in the pursuit of the case whenever the military government was due for more money (p69).

As with other right-wing satellites, "improvement" is always found at money-crunch time. This manipulation of evidence to protect the flow of arms and money to the regime would not be easy with full disclosure – or with a critical and honest press (p69).

The Trial – five national guardsmen for $19.4 million

The trial of the killers of the four women took place three-and-a-half years after the acts of murder, despite the fact that the triggermen were immediately identified and despite enormous U.S. pressure. The defense at the trial made no effort to defend the men on the g roups of "orders from above", although this is a standard defense in such cases, and significant evidence was available for use in this instance (p69).

Like the Salvadoran elections of 1982 and 1984, this trial was t horoughly American in staging and motivation. The stakes were U.S. dollars. Congress had frozen $19.4 million pending the favorable outcome of the case (p70).

Within twenty-four hours of he decision, the State Department, announcing that justice had been done, released the money to the charge of the Minister of Defense. In conformity with the predictions of a propaganda model, the mass media failed entirely to capture the quality of this scene – the American omnipresence, the courtroom security, the failure of the defense to press the reponsibility of the higher authorities.

Twenty-Three Religious Victims in Guatemala 1980-85

The modern history of Guatemala was decisively shaped by the U.S. organized invasion and overt hrow of the democratically elected regime in 1954. Since that time, Guatemala has remained securely within the U.S. sphere of influence. Badly needed economic and social reforms were put off the agenda indefinitely, political democracy was stifled, and state terror was institutionalized (p71).

A propaganda model suggests the victims in Guatamala will be "unworthy", which should be reflected in both the quantity and quality of media attention. Whereas victimization in Soviet client states like Poland and Czechoslovakia is regularly traced back to the Soviet occupations, a propaganda model would

predict that the U.S. media will not explain the state of terror in Guatamala as a natural product of the U.S. intervention in 1954 (p71).
On the contrary, we would expect t he United States to be portrayed as a benevolent and concerned bystander, trying its very best to curb abuses of right and left extremists. From 1954 to the present day, neither reform nor democracy, let alone radical change, has been possible in Guatamala (p72).
The main reason for this is that the forces into whose hands the United states delivered the country in 1954 bitterly opposed any change that mighte affect their entrenched position. Another reason for the failures of both reform and democracy has been ongoing U.S. influence (p72).
The U.S. establishment found the pluralism and democracy years of 1945-1954 intolerable, and it eventually ended that experiment. Not only has Guatemala gradually become a terrorist state rarely matched in the scale of systematic murder of civilians, but its terrorist proclivities have increased markedly at strategic moments of escalated U.S. intervention (p72).
The United States brought in police training in the 1970s, which was followed by the further insitionalization of violence. With Guatemala, the United States invented the “counterinsurgency state”. The special role of the army in the counterinsurgency state gradually elevated its status and power, and eventually gave it the institutional capacity to rule Guatemala (p73).
As in many U.S. client states, the military used its power to carve out economic opportunities and to steal, directly or indirectly. The terrorism, thievery and au tomony of the Guatemalan military reached a temporary peak during the reign of Lucas Garcia (1978-1982) (p73).
During the Reagan years, the number of civilians murdered in Guatemala ran into the tens of thousands, and disappearances and mutilated bodies were a daily occurance. Studies by Amnestly International and other human-rights monitors have documented a military machine run amok, with the indiscriminate killing of peasants, the forcible relocation of hundreds of thousands of farmers and villagers into virtual concentration camps, and the enlistment of many hundreds of thousands in compulsory civil patrols (p73).
Reagan, however, visiting Guatamala in December 1982, commented that head of state Rios Montt was “totally committed to democracy” and was receiving a “bum rap” on human rights abuses. The Reagan policy toward Guatamala was “constructive engagement” (p73).
From the beginning, the administration strove to embrace and provide arms to the military governments. Ongoing mass murder was merely an inconvenience. One method by which the administration sought to rrehabilitate our relations with the Guatemala regimes was by c ontinual lying about their human-rights record (p74).
Amnesty International gave detailed evidence that the thousands of murders were almost entirely governmental in origin, including those of the death squads, whose victims were targeted in an annex of Guatemala’s national palace under the direct supervision of President Lucas Garcia (p74).
Amnesty International found Rios Montt to be another top-rank murderer, who appears to have exceeded his predecessor in civilian massacres. When Rios Montt was ousted the State Department line shifted. It was admitted that things had been terrible under Rios Montt, but now there was a dramatic improvement. All this can only occur if the mass media are cooperative (p75).

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They must be willing to downplay or ignore the large-scale murders gong on in Guatemala in the first place. A propaganda model would anticipate a lack of media interest in Guatemala's "unworthy" victims and an evasion of the U.S. role in its evolution and practices (p75).
We would expect reports on Guatemala put out by Amnesty International and other human-rights groups to be downplayed and ignored, despite their spectacular data and horrifying stories. As Amnesty International pointed out in 1981: "t he bodies of the victims have been found piled up in ravines, dumped at roadsides or buried in mass graves. Thousands bore the scars of torture, and death had come to most by strangling with a garrotte, by being suffocated in rubber hoods or by being shot in the head" (p75).
The expecations of the propaganda model are fully realized in this case. The Reagan administration chose to support and provide regular apologetics for a denocidal government that was using a policy of massacre to destry a purely indigenous revolt (p76).
The "challenge" for the Reagan administration was how to sell the support of mass murder. The holocaust years 1978-85 yielded a steady stream of documents by human-rights groups that provided dramatic evidence of a state terrorism in Guatemala approaching genocidal levels (p77).
Many of these documents had a huge potential for educating and arousing the public, but as a propaganda model would anticipate, they were treated in our media sample in a manner that minimized their informational value and capacity to create and mobilize public indignation (p77).
The spectacular Amnest y International report of 1981 on "Disappearances" describing a frightening development of state terrorism in the Nazi mold, was entirely ignored in our media sample. In its concern to protect the Guatemalan generals in their terroristic assault on the population, the Reagan administration took umbrage at organizations like Amnesty International and mounted a systematic campaign in 1981 and 1982 to discredit them as left-wing and politically biased (p78).
An amazing piece of apologetics for an army that was in the midst of slaughtering t housands of civilians was distributed within Guatemala as an official U.S. document, and its full text appeared in the Guatemalan press (p78).
The government is a primary flak producer as well as information source. The Guatemala episode is an important illustration of the government's efforts to silence competing sources of information. It is interesting that the New York Times never mentioned or criticized this sinister campaign, even though it was carried out in the cont4ext of a policy protecting mass murderers (p79).

The Mutual Support Group Murders in Guatemala

Human rights monitoring and protective agencies have had a very difficult time organizing and surviving in the "death-squad democracies" of El Salvador and Guatemala. Between October 1980 and March 1983, five officials of the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador were seized and murdered by the security forces (p79).
In accord with a propaganda model, these murders should have been of little interest to the U.S. mass media, and this expecation is borne out by evidence. The New York Times had four back-page articles on these five murders (p80).

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Guatemala has been even more inhospitable to human rights organizations than El Salvador. "Disappearances" as an institutional form began in Guatemala in the mid-1960s and eventually reached levels unique in the Western Hemisphere, with the total estmiated to be some 40,000 (p80).
Protest groups that have formed to seek information and legal redress have been c onsistently driven out of business by state-organized murder. According to the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, in 1984 alone there were an average of one hundred political murders and over forty disappearances per month in Guatemala (p80).
There is no legal redress in Guatemala, and nothing useful can be obtained by appeals to the police or courts of law. Thirty members of the newly organized Mutual Support Group, or GAM, held a press conference in Guatemala City in June 1984, denouncing the disapparances and calling on the government "to intervene immediately in order to find our loved ones" (p81).
In October 1984, GAM sponsored a march and mass for the disappeared at the cat hedral. Protestors were seized on the streets and an estimated one hundred were assasinated or disappeared. The organization continued to grow. Most of the members were women, a large majority peasant women from the countryside (p82).
Nothing, of course, was do ne in response to the GAM demands. The assembly had no powers anyway, but was too fearful even to pass a resolution of support. The military rulers were getting annoyed, and phone threats, letters of warning, and open surveillance intensified (p82).
On grounds of newsworthiness, the murders of two GAM leaders, along with the brother and child of one of them, would seem to deserve high-order attention. Their bravery was exceptional, the villainy that they were opposing was extraordinary, the justice for their cause was unassailable, and the crimes they suffered were more savage than those undergone by Popieluszko (p83).
On the other hand, the Reagan administration was busily trying to enter into warmer and more supportive relatons with the Guatemalan military regime and was going to great pains to put the reigme in a favorable light (p83).
A propaganda model would anticipate that even these dramatic and horrifying murders would be treated in a low-key manner and quickly dropped by the mass media. That, unlike Popieluszko, there would be no sustained inerest, no indignation capable of arousing the public. These expectations are fully vindicated by the record (p83).
In the popieluszko case, once it was established that the police had committed the murder, the media spent a great deal of space discussing the police apparatus and police methods, as well as attending to the responsiblility of the people at higher levels for the murder. The Times doesn't discuss these questions at all in relation to the GAM murders (p85).
The struc ture of he Guatemalan murder machine and how it works would make a good story, and numerous details of it s operations were available, but this did not fit the government agenda and the Times format (p85).
The links to the top in the case of unworthy victims do not fit the propaganda format. The Times does a nice job of making the GAM murders seem to be part of the natural background – regretteble but inevitable (p85).

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The convergence between Reagan administration policy toward Guatemala and media priorities was complete. As in the past, the unworthiness of these victims remains an essential ingredient in the Guatemalan army's continued freedom to kill (p86).

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Legitimizing versus meaningless third world elections

Third World elections provide an excellent testing ground for a propaganda model. Some elections are held in friendly client states to legitimize their rulers and regimes, whereas ot hers are held in disfavored or enemy countries to legitimise their political systems (p87).

Elections in the friendly states are often held under U.S. sponsorship and wth extensive U.S. management and public-relations support. The elections held in Guatemala in 1984-85 were strongly supported by the United States for image-enhancing purposes. The elections held in Nicaragua in 1984, by contrast, were intended to legitimize a government that the Reagan administration was striving to de stabilize and overthrow. The U.S. government went to great pains to cast the Nicaraguan elections in a favorable light (p88).

A propaganda model would anticipate mass-media support of the state persepective and agenda. That is, the favoured elections will be found to be legitimate, no matter what the facts; the disfavoured elections will be found deficient, farcical, and fail to be legitimage, again – irrespective of the facts (p88).

The Salvadoran and Guatemalan elections of 1982 and 1984-85 were held under conditions of severe, ongoing state terror against the civilian population, whereas in Nicaragua this was not the case. To find the former elections legitimate and the Nicaraguan election a farce, the media would have had to use different standars of evaluation in the two sets of cases, and, more specifically, it would have been necessary for them to avoid discussing state terror and other basic electoral co nditions in the Salvadoran and Guatemalan elections (p88).

As we will see, the media fulfilled these requirements and met the needs of the state to a remarkable degree (p88).

Election-propaganda frameworks

The U.S government has employed a number of devices in its sponsored elections to put them in a favorable light. The sponsor government tries to associate the election with the happy word "democracy" and he military regime it backs with support of the elections (p88).

It emphasizes what a wonderful thing it is to be able to hold any election at all under conditions of internal conflict, and it makes it appear a moral triumph that the army has agreed to support the election and abide by its results (p89).

The refusal of he rebel opposition to particpate in the election is portrayed as a rejection of democracy and proof of its antidemocratic tendancies, although the very plan of the election involves the rebels' exclusion from the ballot (p89).

These are used to transform the election into a dramatic struggle between, on one side, the "born-again" democratic army and on the other, the rebels opposing democracy, peace, and the right to vote. Official observers are dispatched to the election scene to assure its public-relations success (p89).

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Nominally, their role is to see that the election is “fair”. Their real function, however, is to provide the appearance of fairness by focusing on the government’s agenda and by channeling press attention to a reliable source (p89).
They testify to fairness on the basis of long lines, smiling faces, no beatings in their presence, and the assurances and enthusiasm of U.S. and client-state officials. But these superficialities are entirely consistent with a staged fraud (p89).
Official observers are able to perform their public-relations function because the government chooses observers who are reliable supporters of its aims and publicizes their role, and the press gives them respectful attention (p89).
In elections held in disfavoroured or enemy states, the U.S. government agenda is turned upside down. Elections are no longer equated with democracy, and U.S. officials no longer marvel at the election being held under adverse conditions. They do not commend the army for supporting he election and agreeing to abide by its results (p90).
Now the stress is on the hidden motives of he sponsors of the election, who are trying to legitimize themselves by this tricky device of a so-called election. Most important, the agenda of factors relevant to appraising an election is altered (p90).
Attention is now shifted to he basic parameers that wee off he agenda in the sponsored election. In brief, the government uses a well-nigh perfect system of Orwellian doublethink; forgetting a criterion “that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again… drawing it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed” (p91).
It even acknowledges this fact: a senior U.S. official told members of the Latin American Studies association: “The United States is not obliged to apply the same standard of judgement to a country whose government is avowedly hostile to the U.S. as for a country like El Salvador, where it is not” (p91).
But while a government may employ a blatant double standard, media which adhere to minimal standards of objectivity are not themselves part of a propaganda system would apply a single standard (p91).

Basic Electoral Conditions in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua

All three of these countries were in the midst of serous conflict during their elections. Despite the common feature of ongoing conflict, electoral c onditions were far more favorable in Nicaragua than in El Salvador and Guatemala (p92).
The LASA report on the Nicaraguan election notes that their program “implies redisribution of access to wealth and public services. The state will use its power to guarantee fulfillment of the basic needs of the majority of the population” (p92).
Qualified obervers conclude that the Nicaraguan government pursued this logic, although this fact is excluded from the free press. The Salvadoran and Guatemalan governments, by contrast, were ruled by elites tha had been struggling desperately for decades to avoid the very kinds of reforms the Sandinistas were implementing in Nicaragua (p92).

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Extreme repression was the long standing method of control of the majority in El Salvador and Guatemala, with vigorous and unceasing U.S. support. The aim of this repression was to keep the population apathetic and to destroy popular organizations that might lay the basis for a meaningful democracy (p92).

The Sandinistas were engaged in mobilizing the majority and involving them in political life, which they could afford to do because their programs were intended to serve the general population. Every arrest or act of harassment in Nicaragua was publicized and transformed into evidence of the sinister quality of the Sandinista government in the free press in the United States (p93).

Meanwhile, the Guatemalan and Salvadoran regimes could indulge in torture, rape, mutilation, and murder on a daily and massive basis without invoking remotely proportional attention or indignation. In the context, the Nicaraguan governement was under intense presure to toe the mark, whereas the U.S. satillites were free to murder at will without serious political cost (p93).

We will now consider hos El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua compared in the individual categories of conditions of a free election (p93).

Free Speech and Assembly

In El Salvador, the right to free speech and free assembly was legally suspended under a state-of-seige order of March 7, 1980. Many thousands of civilians were seized, imprisoned, tortured, raped, and murdered outside of legal processes for alleged “subversive” actions and thoughts (p94).

In Guatemala, during 1984 and 1985, the actions of the armed forces against alleged subversives was entirely outside t he rule of law. Thousands were seized, tortured, and killed wit hout warrant and without any individual right to hearing or trial (p94).

As in El Salvador, mutilation and exposure of the tortured bodies of dissidents became common place. It was noted by many observers in the Guatemalan elections that al though the big issues in theat country were land distribution and reform and basic human rights, no political candidates discussed or advocated either land reform, or restructuring the military (p96).

The rural masses were under army discipline and traumatized by mass killings and the absence of any vestigage of the rule of law, and the candidates were unable to raise openly the fundamental issues of the society (p96).

In Nicaragua, the army and police did not regularly seize alleged subversives and torture and murder them. Mutilated bodies were not put on public display as part of the system of public education. Dissidents were able to speak freely without fear of murder (p97).

Freedom of assembly in Nicaragua was somewhat limited by harassment, but, once again, it was not ruled out by state terror, as was the case in El Salvador and Guatemala. So, the first basic condition of a free election was partially met in Nicaragua, but was not met at all in El Salvador and Guatemala.

Freedom of the Press

In El Salvador, the only substantial newspapers critical of the Governemnt were closed in July 1980 and January 1981. The church paper and radio station were repeatedly shut down by bombing attacks. No

paper or station representing the principal opposition had been able to operate except clandestinely (p97).
On March 10, a death list of thirty-fieve journalists was circulated by a “death squad”, and on March 18 the mutilated bodies of four Dutch journalists were recovered. none of the murders of Journalists in El Salvador were ever “solved” although they were essentially murders carried out under the auspices of the state (p97).
In Guatemala, forty-eight journalists wree murdered between 1978 and 1985, and many others were kidnapped or threatened. These killings, kidnappings, and threats have been a primary means of control of the media. As in El Salvador, no one had been apprehended and tried for any of these crimes (p97).
Given the extreme climate of fear in Guatemala, and threats for stepping out of line, even the conservative press is cautious and engages in continuous self-censorship. All the central topics that should be debated in this terrorized society are carefully avoided (p98).
In Nicaragua, once again, there were no reported deaths of journalists by state terrorists, nor even threats of personal violence. The La Prenza newspaper published manifestos of opposition groups and a pastrol letter critical of the regime. No comparable paper was allowed to exist above ground even briefly, in El Salvador and Guatemala (p98).
There is no doubt that the media in Nicaragua were under government constraint, with censorship and perodic emergency controls that seriously encroached on press freedom. It should be noted however that Nicaragua is under foreign attack and in a state of serious warfare (p98).
The condition of freedom of the press necessary for a free election was clearly absent in El Salvador and Guatemala, and that it was partially met in Nicaragua.

Freedom of organization of intermediate groups

Perhaps the most important fact about El Salvador in the two years prior to the election of March 1982 was the decimation of popular and private organizations that could pose any kind of challenge to the army and oligarchy (p99).
The teachers’ union was decimated by several hundred murders; the university was occupied, looted, and closed down by the army; organized student and professional groups were destroyed by arrests and killings, and even the peasant union had some one hundred of its organizers and leaders murdered between October 1979 and the election of March 1982 (p99).
In Guatemala, too, intermediate organizations such as peasant and trade unions, teacher and student groups, and professional organizations were regularly attacked by the armed forces since 1954. The process of demobilization of institutions threatening the dominant elites culminated in the early 1980s, when by government proclamation “illicit association” was made punishable by law (p99).
Only the armed forces determined when illititness occurred. In Nicaragua again the contrast with the two U.S. clients is marked. Under Sandinista management there was a spurt in union and peasant organization. A deliberate attempt was made to mobilize the population to participate in decision-making at the local level and to interact with higher-level leaders (p100).

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Oxfam complimented the Nicaraguan government highly for this effort. The popular organizations were profoundly democratic in their efforts of involving the populace in decision-making and educating them on the possiblities of participation in public life (p100).
On the third basic condition for a free election, El Salvador and Guatemala therefore did not qualify in the years 1984-1985; Nicaragua did, at least to a significant degree (p100).

Freedom to organize parties, field candidates, and campaign for office

No party of the left could organize and present candidates in the 1982 and 1984 elections in El Salvador. A year before the March 1982 election, the army published a list of 138 "traitors", which included virtually all politicians of the left and the left-center (p100).
Not only radical but even pro-U.S., mildly reformist parties could not escape decimation by political murder during the years 1980-84. No party could organize and run candidates in El Salvador that put high priority on terminating the sar by negotiations with rebels (p101).
Reporters and observers were unanimous in 1982 that the main thing the public wanted out of the election was peace. But if no peace candidate was eligible to run, the election was a fraud for this reason alone (p101).
Duarte always accepted fully the pursuit of a military solution and no compromise with the "subversives" – a phrase that Duarte used continually, just as do the army and death squad leaders. Duarte not only provided the façade of "reform", he regularly complimented the army for its loyal service (p102).
The Salvadoran public was never offered the option that the press itself acknowledge the voters craved (p102).
In Guatemala, as in El Salvador, no parties of the left participated in the 1984 election. The main guerilla movements were outside the electoral orbit. Their leaders would have been killed if apprehended, but they would not have participated anyway withouta drastic alteration in he basic social and electoral conditions (p102).
Even a centrist party like the Christian Democrats had suffered scores of murders in the years 1980-83. Besides, no seroiusly left party would have qualified in 1984-85, under the laws of "illicit association" mentioned earlier (p102).
The peasant majority was not represented or spoken for by any candidate. National political parties that speak for major groups like the working class or indiginous people do not exist, and as a result, these sectors are insitutionally excluded from the political system (p103).
Americas Watch stated that one of the civil-patrol system's funcitons is "to provide vigilance and control of the local population, preventing any form of independent political organizations. In Nicaragua, in 1984, the spectrum of candicates was much wider than in El Salvador or Guatemala (p104).
The Conservative Democratic party and the Independent Liberal party both issued st rong calls for respect for private property, reduced government control of the economy, elimination of press and other controls, and a foreign policy of greater nonalignment and accomodation (p104).
The ability of candidates to qualify and run, and the range of options, was substantially greater in Nicaragua than in El Salvador and Guatemala (p105).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

Absence of State Terror and a Climate of Fear

During the years 1980-84 the death squads worked freely in El Salvador, in close coordinatin with the army and security forces. The average rate of killings of civilians in the thirty months prior to the 1982 election was approximately seven hundred per month (p105).

In Guatemala, too, the endemic fear based on years of unconstrained and continuing army violence was a dominant fact of national life. Torture, killings and disappearances continued at an extraordinary rate, and millions of peasants remained under the strict scrutiny and c ontrol of the government through the use of civil patrols. Guatemala remained, in short, a nation of prisoners (p105).

in the case of Nicaragua the central fact that differentiates it from the U.S. client states is that the government was not murdering civilians. The main fear of ordinary citizens in Nicaragua was of violence by the contras and the United States (p106).

Therefore, the fifth condition for a free election was met in Nicaragua, but not in El Salvador or Guatemala. Neither El Salvador nor Guatemala met any of the five basice conditions of a free election, whereas Nicaragua met some of them well, others to a lesser extent (p106).

The Coercion Packages in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua

In the U.S. government's sponsored elections, voter turnout is interpreted as public support for the election and its sponsors. In disapproved elections, like in Nicaragua, this frame is abandoned, and voter turnout is either ignored or declared meaningliess because of limited options or coercive threats by authorities (p106).

The elections in El Salvador were held under conditions of military rule where mass killings of "subversives" had taken place in a climate of fear that had been established. If the government then sponsors an election and the local military authorities urge people to vote, a significant part of the vote should be assumed to be a result of built-in coercion (p106).

A propaganda model would anticipate that the U.S. mass media make no such assumption, and they did not (p106).

In El Salvador in 1982 and 1984, voting was also required by law. In the 1984 election advertising by the government and military prior to the elections stressed the obligation to vote rather than the freedom to vote. Given the climate of fear, it is evident that the coercive element in generating turnout during the Salvadoran elections has been large (p107).

In Guatemala, as in El Salvador, voting was required by law. Also, as in El Salvador, newspaper ads sponsored by the army asserted that it was treasonous to fail to voite or to vote null or blank. Many people expressed fears that nonvoting would subject them to reprisals (p107).

In Nicaragua, while voting registration was obligatory, voting was not required by law. In sum, Nicaragua did not have a potent coercion package at work to help get out the vote. The Salvadoran and Guatemalan governments did.

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

El Salvador: How the US media transformed a deranged killing machine into the protector of an incipient democracy

In reporting on the 1982 Salvadoran election, the U.S. mass media closely followed the government agenda. The propaganda frame of the government gavbe turnout high importance in the Salvadoran election but none in the Nicaraguan election (p108).

The mass media did not note that voting was required by law in El Salvador, nor did they mention the warning from the Salvadoran government that nonvoting was treasonous. That the military agreed to the election because it couldn't lose was never suggested by the media (p109).

In the propaganda framework, the security forces of client states "protect elections"; only those of enemy states interfere with the freedom of citizens to vote without constraint. No peace party was on the Salvadoran ballot. And after the election was over, the war went on, and the death squads continued to flourish (p109).

The real purpose of the election was to placate the home population of the United States and render them willing to fund more war and terror.

First Step: Guatemala opts for moderation

The U.S. government was less deeply involved in the Guatemalan elections of 1984 and 1985 thatn it was in those held in El Salvador. But the Reagan administration went to great pains to put a favorable gloss on the murderous regime, and to attempt to reintegrate them fully into the free-world alliance (p110).

It encouraged the 1984-85 elections, provided advisory and financial support for election management, and gave public-relations assistance and sent official observers to help put the election in a favorable light (p110).

The purpose of the election , from the standpoint of he Reagan administration and the ruling army, was to aler the international "image" of Guatemala in order to facilitate aid and loans. A telling manifestation of bias was the media's ready acceptance of the Guatemalan elections as meaningful, even though they were admitedly for image-making (p110).

In an enemy state where an election was held under comparable conditions, it would be designated a meaningless public relations exercise. As in the case of El Salvador, the murderous rule of the Guatemalan Generals did not delegitimize them for the U.S. mass media nor suggest any possible justice to the rebel cause (p111).

The mass media's sourcing on the Guatemalan election was co nfined almost entirely to U.S. officials and official observers, the most prominent Guatemalan political candidates, and generals. Spokespersons for popular organizations, the churches, human-rights groups, and ordinary citizens, were essentially ignored by the media (p112).

The restricted menu of media sources flows from and reinforces the media's propensity to adopt a patriotic agenda. In connnection with the 1985 election, the bishops put forth another powerful statement, once again questioning whether an election can be meaningful in "a situation close to slavery and desperation" (p113).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

The letter was not mentioned in the major media or anywhere else, although the bishops were conservative, credible, and one of the few organized bodies in Guatemala not crushed by state terror. In elections held in client states, fundamental electoral conditions, such as the presence or absence of the rule of law, are off the agenda (p114).

In what must be one of the lowest points, the Times implies that the Guatemala election establishes and electoral model for Nicaragua. As in the case of El Salvador, the U.S. mass media never suggested that the exclusion of the Guatemalan insurgent groups rendered the Guatemalan election meaningless (p115).

The vast majority of Guatemalans were very poor, and they were entirely excluded from political participation or representation since 1954. There is no way to measure the strength of popular support for the insurgents, but in light of the fact that they espouse programs well orientated to the interests of the general population and have been able to maintain an insurgency wit hout significant external aid, and that the army response has been a war against virtually the entire rural population, the rebel claim to be a "main opposition" would appear strong (p116).

Nicaragua: Media Service in the Delegitimizing Process

In contrast with the Salvadoran and Guatemalan cases, he Reagan administration was intent on discrediting the Nicaraguan election, which threatened to legitimize the Sandinista government and thus weaken the case for U.S. funding of a terrorist army (p117).

There were 450-odd foreign oberservers in attendance at the Nicaraguan election, some with superb credentials, observing more freely and at greater length than the official U.S. observers in El Salvador and Guatemala. Time and the rest of the mass media paid no attention to them (p117).

With no U.S. government designated official observers available in Nicaragua, the media relied even more heavily than usual on U.S. government handouts.

Tone of Negativism and Apathy

Time magazine hardly attempts to hide the fact that it takes its cues from Washington. It describes the election in Nicaragua as "a campaign without suspence" with voters "too apathetic to go to the polls at all". In the Salvadoran election, Time's tone was different: "There was no denying the remarkable sense of occasion" (p118).

There is never apathy or fear of government force in Time's renditions of demonstration elections. Time almost completely ignored the small parties, union protestors, rebels and human rights groups, finding more people voting out of fear than they did in Guatemala – a remarkable discovery given the circumstances in the two countries (p119).

The Irish delegation pointed out that the low rate of abstention was more meaninging ful and "invalidates predictions that large sectors of the population were opposed to the election" (p119).

The invariable enthusiasm and optimism found by the U.S. mass media in client state elections, and the apathy and negativism found in elections in states disfavored by the U.S. administration, has nothing to do with electoral realities and must be explained entirely by an imposed propaganda agenda and the filtering out of contrary opinion and information (p120).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

Ignoring the Superior Quality of the Nicaraguan Election

In the propaganda format, a great deal of attention is paid to the mechanical properties of elections in client states, but not in states whose elections are being denigrated. Nicaragua went to great pains to provide for election secrecy, and for an easy and intelligible system of voting. They had a massive literacy campaign before the election, making electoral printed matter generally accessible (p120).

The Irish delegation noted that "recent elections in other Central American countries like El Salvador and Guatemala did not introduce such measures". Nicaragua also deliberately avoided transparent ballet boxes, ID stamping, and any oher mechanism that would allow the authorities to identify whether or how somebody voted (p120).

In Nicaragua, also, there was proportional voiting, which made it possible for the smaller parties to obtain legislative representation. Parties could also qualify quite easily to participate in the election. In Guatemala, 4000 signatures were needed to qualify in 1984, a large number and not easy for dissident parties to collect in a society with daily political murders (p121).

More generally, the substantial merits of the Nicaraguan elections were never contrasted with the procedures in the U.S. client states (p121).

Rebel distruption into the black hole: turnout no longer an index of triumph of democracy

In the Salvadoran election, rebel disruption was a central feature of the government's propaganda frame. Because the rebels opposed the election, voting by the people proved their rrejection of the rebels and their approval of the army (p121).

Turnout wa the index of democratic triumph and rebel defeat. The mass media followed this frame without question. In the case of Nicaragua, the propaganda format was reversed – the rebels were the good guys, and the election held by the bad guys was condemned in advance (p121).

Rebel opposition to the election did not make voting and a large turnout a repudiation of the rebels and approval of the Sandinistas. The U.S. mass media once again followed the government agenda, even though it meant an exact reversal of the standards they had applied to the Salvadoran election (p122).

The Sandinistas did not kill ordinary citizens on a daily basis, as was true in the "death-squad democracies". Thus turnout was far more meaningful in the Nicaraguan election than the ones held in El Salvador and Guatemala – the public was free to abstain as well as to vote for opposition parties. The U.S. media disposed of this problem mainly by massive suppression. They simply ignored the contra-U.S. campaign for abstention (p122).

The U.S. mass media, which had featured rebel distruption heavily in reference to the Salvadoran election found it entirely unnewsworthy as regards Nicaragua (p123).

The revived sensitivity to coercion

The "coercion package", as mentioned, was off he agenda for the U.S. government and mass media in addressing the Salvadoran and Guatemalan elections. So was the element of fear engenered by mass murder and the absence of the rule of law in these U.S. client states (p123).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

Coercion and fear where back on the agenda, however, for Nicaragua. As mentioned, both the Guatemalan and Salvadoran army warned the public that voting was required by law and that nonvoting was treasonous (p123).

In Nicaragua, the official government position, expressed in the law, was that Nicaraguans did not have to vote. Time magazine suppressed this fact. The Times playing down of state terror in Guatemala as a basic factor affecting the quality of the election in all its dimensions amounts to a massive deceit (p124). The Irish delegation stressed the superior protection of secrecy in the balloting in Nicaragua. They also emphasized the fact that voting was not required by law, and that, contrary to the U.S. government propaganda expounded by Time and other media entities, the corercive elements in getting out the vote were small (p125).

The "main opposition" to the fore

In El Salvador and Guatemala, the fact that the insurgents wree off the ballot did not faze the U.S. media one bit. Nor were the media affected by the army's murder of the opposition leadership in both El Salvador and Guatemala (p125).

In El Salvador, the exclusion of the rebels was part of the U.S. government's electoral plan. The debarment and even murder of their leaders did not co mpromise election quality. In the Nicaraguan case, in sharp contrast, the U.S. government worked with a different frame – the exclusion of its sponsored rebels and any ot her candidates was a serious matter that threatened the quality of the election (p125).

The media followed like good little doggies (lap- rather than watch-). The central dramatic propaganda line for the Nicaraguan election pressed by U.S. officials was the alleged struggle of Arturo Cruz to induce the Sandinistas to create an open system in which he would be able to compete fairly (p125). Cruz, however, was a "main opposition" only in the propaganda construct of he U.S. government and mass media. There is good reason to believe that Cruz never intended to run, but that he and his sponsors held out this possiblity precisely to allow the propaganda frame to be used effectively (p126). The mass media focused on the Cruz drama heavily and uncritically. Cruz was given enormous play: he was continually referred to as the "main opposition" or "leading opponent" of the ruling party. For the Times, the election would be "a sham" without Cruz (p126).

The Times did have one back page article that provided evidence that Cruz had not intended to run or would not have been allowed to run by his closest Nicargauan allies and U.S. officials. But this low-keyed article stood alone and did not aler the unremitting focus on the alleged exclusion of this alleged main opposition as the centerpiece of the Nicargauan election drama (p126).

In focusing on an alleged "main opposition" in Nicaragua, which voluntarily chose not to run, while ignoring a real main opposition in El Salvador, excluded by force and plan, the mass media simply adopted without question the government's propaganda framework (p126).

Cruz and U.S. government officials were given the floor to present their themes, which were transmitted on a daily basis with no accompanying notice of their possible falsity and manipulative intent, in perfect accord with the expectations of a propaganda model (p126).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

The Reagan administration not only dangled Cruz before the media, it tried hard to induce or bribe other candidates in the Nicaraguan election to withdraw in order to fulfill the prophecy of a meaningless election. The brazeness of this intervention by a great power was remarkable, but the U.S. media gave it minimal attention (p126).

CBS, Newsweek and Time ignored the U.S. bribe program entirely. Time gave great emphasis to the number of candidates and the withdrawal of several, but it never once mentioned that this was helped along by U.S. connivance, bribes, and pressure (p127).

It even quoted without comment the State Department fabrication that "it did not try to influence the outcome of the election". All substantive evidence is placed in the black hole. In the same article, Time asserts that "the U.S. had pushed hard for elections in which all parties felt free to particpate", a fabrication of considerable audacity (p127).

As regards the scope of electoral options in Nicaragua, the Irish delegation noted that "The law guarnatees participation to political parties of all ideologies". No major political tendency in Nicaragua was denied access to the electoral process in 1984. This, of course, could not be said of El Salvador and Guatemala (p127).

These important features of the Nicaraguan law and practice were not mentioned in the U.S. media compared with those of the client states. The Irish delegation stressed two facts about Cruz as the "main opposition". First "while considerable coverage was given to his party in the international press, members of the delegatio found that their impact among the population was scant and few supported their policies (p127).

Second, the Irish delegation stressed the fact that the populace was free not to vote or to spoil votes.

The Concern Over Freedom of the Press and Assembly

Basic conditions of a free election were not only back on the media agenda, but there were strong suggestions that Nicaragua was failing to meet these conditions. These suggestions were based almost entirely on quotes from U.S. officials and Cruz and his allies in Nicaragua (p129).

The media never gave evidence of having actually looked into these matters for themselves or tapped independent sources of evidence. In El Salvador in 1982 and 1984 therre was far more severe censorship, food shortages and complete exclusion of the main opposition than in Nicaragua. But these didn't make it apparent to CBS News that a free and open election was not in the cards in that U.S. sponsored election (p130).

The Irish delegation addressed these issues, gave evidence of having examined them seriously, and came up with conclusions sharply at odds with the U.S. government-media portrayals. Given the decision not to register, Cruz and the Coordinadors were deliberately campaigning outside of the legal framework of protections which had been created by electoral law (p130).

It is striking how the U.S. media avoided comparisons and data. The way in which the media can denounce restrictions on freedom of the press in Nicaragua after having totally ignored the question in El Salvador was remarkable (p131).

Multiple parties from the far right to the center-right in El Salvador demonstrated clear choices, but a variety of parties from both levet to far left in Nicaragua didn't cause a perception of real choices. How

many journalists had been killed in El Salvador? Papers closed? Radio stations blown up? Union leaders and political figures murdered? These questions were off the agenda in U.S. staged election and the papers ignored them (p131).

Quantitative Evidence of Systematic Media Bias

[Series of tables with quantitative evidence]. As the basic conditions for a free election were superior in Nicaragua and he coercive elements less acute, the emphasis on basic conditions only in the Nicaraguan case is even more clearly evidence of systematic bias (p137).

The MIG Crisis Staged During Nicaragua's Election Week

As Newsweek pointed out on November 19, 1984, "The story of the freighter to Nicaragua allegedly carrying MIGs first broke during the election-night coverage", but at no point does Newsweek, or Time, or CBS News suggest that the timing was deliberate (p137).

Although the MIGs weren't there, and the timing was perfect for diverting attention from a successful election that the Reagan administration had been attempting to discredit, the elite media asked no questions, even in retrospect (p137).

The administration claimed that when the freighter was loaded, satellite observation was blocked so that the cargo was unknown. The mass media presented this as fact, making no effort to evaluate the claim. What the media chose to focus on was administration assessments of what it might do if MIGs were in fact being delivered. This allowed the whole frame of discourse to shift to the assumption that the Nicaraguans had done something, and something intolerable (p137).

The fact that MIGs weren't brought in doesn't interfere with inputing an intention to the Nicaraguans based on a non-existent fact. In t he middle of an article on the Nicaraguan electioin, Time inserts the government claim that a ship carrying crates of the type used to transport MIG-21s was due at a Nicaraguan port (p138).

Time never questions a governement propaganda ploy, no matter how blatant, and it offers a retrospective only when the government tacitly concedes it had deliberately deceived. Like Newsweek and the Times, Time allows the government to set the agenda with a public relations statement: if the Nicaraguans did this, it would be a challenge to the United States (p138).

How then would we react, what are our policy options etc. The truth of the claim and the liklihood that this is a manipulative ploy to help remove the unwanted elections from attention are not discussed. And the fact that this is part of a policy of aggression against a tiny victim is never raised (p138).

The MIG ploy was entirely successful. A tone of crisis was manufactured, and "options" against the hypothetical Sandinista "threat" were placed at the center of public attention. The final results of Nicaragua's election were not even reported by most of the international media. They were literally buried under an avalanche of alarmist news reports (p138).

The Salvadoran and Guatemalan elections successfully legitimized the U.S.-backed regimes, at least for American elite opinion. The far more honest Nicaraguan election failed to accomplish this, thanks to the loyal service of the media (p139).

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The Role of Official "Observers" in Reinforcing a Propaganda Line

Official observers provide a perfect example of the use of government-controlled "experts" and "pseudo-events" to attract media attention and channel it in the direction of the propaganda line. And they regularly succeed in doing this in demonstration election, no matter how brief their stay and foolish their comments (p139).

The media take it for granted that official observers are newsworthy: their selection by the government from "reputable" institutions adds to their credibility, and their observations will have effects on opinion and policy (p139).

The media's regular use of these observers for comments on election quality violates norms of substantive objectivity in the same manner as the use of any straight government handout by the Times or Pravada (p139).

The Nicaraguan election was remarkable for the number of foreign observers and observer teams. The State Department was able to get the media to follow its agenda, even though this involved them in a blatant reversal of the critiera they had employed the same year in El Salvador and Guatemala (p139).

The media also allowed major lies to be institutionalized. These propaganda lies could not have been perpetuated if such reports as those by the Irish delegation had been accorded proper weight. Their very credibility, objectivity, and quality were disturbing, and necessitated that they be bypassed by institutions serving a propaganda function (p140).

As mentioned, electoral conditions in Nicaragua in 1984 were far more favorable than in El Salvador and Guatemala. In El Salvador and Guatemala, none of the five basic preconditions of free elections were met. In both of these countries, state sponsored terror, including the exposure of mutilated bodies, had ravaged the civilian population up to the very day of the elections (p140).

In both, voting was required by law, and the populace was obliged to have ID cards signed, testifying that they had voted. In exact accord with the propaganda line of the state, the U.S. mass media found the large turnouts in these countries a triumph of democractic choice (p141).

This was accomplished in large part by the media's simply refusing to examine the basic conditions of a genuinely free election and t heir application to these client-state elections. Only for the Nicaraguan election did the media look at matters such as freedom of the press, and they did this with conspicuous dishonesty (p141).

Despite its superiority on every substantive count, the Nicaraguan election was found by the media to have been a sham and to have failed to legitimize. The mass media will always find a Third World election sponsored by their own government a "step toward democracy", and an election held in a country that their government is busily destablilizing a farce and a sham (p141).

This is what a propaganda model would predict, although the degree of subervience to state interests in the cases we have examined was extraordinary, given the absence of overt coercion. The "filters" yield a propaganda result that a totalitarian state would be hard put to surpass (p141).

Having perpetrated a successful fraud in the interests of the state, the media proceeded, in subsequent years, to reinforce the imagery established by their deception. Guatemala and El Salvador were "new

democracies” with “elected presidents”, Nicaragua, in contrast is a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship that does not have an “elected president” (p141).

The media’s adherence to the state propaganda line is extremely functional. Just as the government of Guatemala could kill scores of thousands without major repercussion because the media recognized that these were “unworthy” victims, so today aid to state terrorists in El Salvador and Guatemala depend heavily on continued media recognition of “worth” and an approprite legitimization (p142).

We may fairly say that the U.S. mass media, despite their righteous self-image as opponents of something called terrorism, serve in fact as loyal agents of terrorism (p142).

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The KGB-Bulgarian Plot to Kill the Pope

Free-Market Disinformation as "News"

With the shooting of the pope in May 1981, and the eventual charges of a KGB-Bulgarian plot, the mass media played a much larger role in originating the claims and in keeping the pot boiling from inception to conclusion of the case (p143).

What makes the Bulgarian Connection so apt an illustration of the value of a propaganda model is that there was no credible case for a Bulgarian Connection from the very beginning. But the mass media played it straight to the bitter end. The Bulgarian Connection met the criterion of utility (p144).

The case began when Mehmet Ali Agca shot and seriously injured Pope John Paul II in St Peter's Square on May 13, 1981. Agca was a Turkish righist and assassin long associated with the Gray Wolves, an affiliate of the extreme right-wing Nationalist Action party (p144).

Initial Western news reports pointed out that Agca was a wanted criminal who had escaped from a Turkish prison in 1979, and that his durable political affiliations had been with the Fascist right. His motives in shooting the pope were unclear (p144).

Western elites needed a carefully stoked anti-Communist fervor in the West. Terrorism and Soviet evil were the centerpieces of the Reagan administration's propaganda campaign that began in 1981, designed to support its planned arms increase and interventionist policies in the Third World (p145).

Thus the shooting of the pope by Agca in May 1981 occurred at a time when important Western interests were looking for ways to tie the Soviet Union to "international terrorism" (p145).

The Sterling Henze Kalb Model

The basic Sterling-Henze-Kalb model suffered from a complete absence of credible evidence. As problems arose, the grounds were shifte, sometimes with a complete reversal of argument. SHK finally settled firmly on the idea that quelling the Polish Solidarity movement was the real Soviet-Bulgarian motive (p148).

The assasination of the pope, especially if blamed on the Soviet Union, would infuriate and unify the Poles and strengthen their opposition to a soviet-dominated regime. Agca and the Turkish right had their own grievances against the pope and a rationale for assassinating him that was independent of any Soviet influence (p148).

Agca was a committed rightist, and therefore not a likely candidate for service to the Communist powers. SHK strove mightily to make Agca out to be a rootless mercenary, but the best they could do was co me up with the fact that Agca didn't seem to have been registered as a member of the Gray Wolves (p149).

But all his friends, associates, and affiliations from high school days onward were the Gray Wolves. Agca seems to have gotten his gun through the Gray Wolves network, not from the Bulgarians. At various points SHK contended that the Soviets and the Bulgarians were professionals who could afford to go after the pope because they would never be implicated themselves (p150).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

But hiring Agca, a wanted criminal and a mentally unbalanced rightist, would appear extremely foolish, as the cover would quickly be blown in the likely event that he was caught (p150).

An Alternative Model

An alternative explanation of the Bulgarian Connection can be derived from the questions the U.S. press would surely have raised if an analogous scenario had occurred in Moscow. One aspect of the strategy of Italian politics at the time was the carrying out of right-wing terrorist attacks, which were then attributed to the left, frequently with the help of forged documents and planted informers committing perjury (p152).

The point of this strategy was to polarize society, discredit the left, and set the stage for a rightest coup. In a number of instances, Agca provided information that borre strong suspicion of having been provided by officials and agents of the court or the police (p154).

No trace was ever found of the money that Agca claimed he had received from the Bulgarians. No witness was ever found who saw him in his many supposed encounters with Bulgarians. It is highly probable that Agca was offered a deal to talk and that it was made clear to him tha the people with power over his well-being wanted him to implicate the Bulgarians and the Soviet Union in the assassination attempt (p154).

The Mass Media's Uncritical Acceptance of the Bulgarian Connection

Despite the implausiblity of the SHK claim that Agca had been hired by the Bulgarians and the KGB to shoot the pope, the Bulgarian connection met the standard of utility. In this case, as a propaganda model would anticipate, the U.S. mass media accepted the SHK model as valid, ignored the alternative model, and participated in a classic propaganda campaign that got the message of Bulgarian-Soviet guilt over to the public (p155).

Some members of the mass media helped orginate the claim of a Bulgarian connection, while others participated only in disseminating the SHK line. The media never considered political convenience, prison conditions, possible deals, plausible deniability etc. And this procedure of reiterating Agca's claims was the principal modality by which the mass media accepted and pushed the propaganda line (p155).

Newsweek nowehere discusses the seventeen-month lag in Agca's confession or his prison conditions, nor does it report about inducements or coercive threats that might have been applied to Agca while in custody. Newsweek states as established fact that "Agca had help from a huge set of Bulgarians", although it proviedes no evidence for this except assertions made by Agca (p156).

Initially, the other major media performed quite uniformly in the same mold – uncritical, trivial, working sloely within the bounds of the SHK model, and entirely bypassing all the hard but obvious questjions raised by the "alternative" model (p156).

All of these expressions of opinions, doubts, interest, suppositions, and minor detail served to produce a lot of smoke – which kept the issue of possible Soviet involvement before the public. They steered quite clear of substantive issues that bore on motives and quality of evidence (p157).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

Part of the reason for this was the media's extraordinary reliance on Sterling and Henze as sources, and their unwillingness to ask these sources probing questions (p157).

Biased Sourcing

Sterling and Henze dominated media coverage by virtue of the very wide distribution of their articles and books on the case, and by their extensive and uncritical use as experts by the elite press, news magazines, and television news and talk shows p158).

Sterling's views were given repeated airing on CBS News, without rebuttal. Henze accounted for twelve of the fourteen articles on the Bulgarian Connection in Christian Science Monitor between September 1982 and May 1985 (p158).

If we ask the deeper question of why these experts should predominate in the first place, the answer must be found in the power of their sponsors and the congeniality of their views to the corporate community and the mainstream media (p158).

It was of no apparent concern to the mass media that Sterling, Henze, and Ledeen were exceptionally biased sources, immune to the rules of evidence and , in fact, agents of disinformation. Paul Henze was a longtime CIA official who had been head of the CIA station in T urkey as a specialist in propaganda (p160).

Henze never referred in his "news" articles to his active participation in Turkish aaffairs as a CIA official. His writings are notable for their consistent apologetics for military rule in Turkey, for their dishonesty, and for the fact that Henze openly disdains the use of rules of evidence in proving Soviet villainy (p160).

The mass media not only allowed these disinformation sources to prevail, they protected them against disclosures that would reveal their dubious credentials. That Henze was a CIA official was almost never mentioned in the press. In Sterling's case, her numerous errors of fact, foolish arguments, and wilder political opinions were not disclosed to readers (p160).

Michael Ledeen, a neoconservative activist and disinformationist, with ready access to the Times, also received its close protection (p161).

The Propaganda Agenda: Questions Unasked, Sources Untapped

There is a close linkage among sources used, frames of reference, and agendas of the newsworthy. When the mass media chose to use Sterling, Henze and Ledeen heavily, they simultaneously adopted a frame of reference in which the Bulgarians and Soviets were presumed guilty (p161).

Hard questions about the quality of the SHK model were simply not asked, and alternative sources and frames were ignored. The media prefer to focus on superficial detail about the partipants and opinions within a narrow range of establishment views. Off the agenda were arguments and facts that would call into question the validity of the basic SHK model (p162).

Any balancing of supposed gains against the costs and risk to the Soviet Union in sponsoring Agca wre simply not undertaken by the mass media. The preposterous claims that Agca had been recruited by the KGB in Turkey and that he took on the appearance of a right-winger as a "cover", were not ridiculed, and were not evaluated when presented as purported truth (p163).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

They simply would not examine and discuss the convenience of the newly discovered plot for so many western interests. The trail in Rome was awkward for the Western media, as Agca quickly declared himself to be Jesus, and more important, failed to produce any supportive evidence backing up his claims of Bulgarian involvement (p166).

The diligent and extensive court investigation found numerous Gray Wolves links to Agca in the period up to his assassination attempt, but no witness to his allegedly numerous meetings with Bulgarians. There was a steady accumulation of claims and evidence of pressures on Agca to implicate the Bulgarians (p166).

But, despite this evidence and failure to convict the Bulgarians, the mass media of the West never provided any seroius reevaluations of the case. The mass media also never looked back at their own earlier claims to see how they had stood up to the test of accumulated evidence (p166).

For them, the alternative model, plausible from the beginning, was still the “Bulgarian view”. The view actually employed by the media from beginning to end was a “U.S. government view”, as suggested by a propaganda model (p167).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

The Indochina Wars (1): Vietnam

Media coverage of the U.S. wars in Indochina have engenered a good deal of bitter controversy. It is widely held that the media "lost the war" by exposing the general population to its horrors and by unfair, incompetent, and biased coverage reflectign the "adversary culture" of the sixties (p169).
On the assumption of a propaganda model we would expect media coverage and interpretation of the war to take for granted that the United States interveneed in the service of generous ideals, with the goal of defending South Vietnam from agression and terrorism and in the interest of democracy and self-determination (p169).
A propaganda model leads to the expectation that there would be no condemnation of the media for uncritical acceptance of the doctrine of U.S. benevolence and for adherence to the official line of all central issues (p170).
Rather, given that the U.S. government did not attain all of its objectives in Indochina, the issue would be whether the media are to be faulted for undermining the nobel cause by adopting too "adversarial" a stance and departing thereby from fairness and objectivity (p170).

The Bounds of Controversy

"for the first time in history", Robert Elegant writes "the outcome of a war was not determined on the battlefield, but on the printed page, and above all, on the television screen". The belief that the media, particularly television, were responsible for the U.S. government failures is widely expressed (p170).
The hypothesis advanced by the propaganda model is that in dealing with the American wars in Indochina, the media were indeed "unmindful", but highly "patriotic". The propaganda model predicts that this should be generally true not only of the choice of topics covered and the way they are covered, but also, of the general background of presupposiitons within which the issues are framed and the news presented (p171).
The media depart from the elite consensus only rarely and in limited ways. U.S. intervention in 1965 enjoyed near-total support. The "intervention" in 1965 included the deployment of U.S. combat forces in Vietnam, the regular bombing of North Vietnam, and the bombing of South Vietnam (p172).
Neither then nor before was there any detectable questioning of he proceed to full-scale "intervention". By that time, only questions of tactics and costs remained open, and further discussion in the mainstream media was largely limited to these narrow issues (p172).
While dissent and d omestic controversy became a focus of media coverage from 1965, the actual views of dissidents and resisters were virtually excluded. These individuals were presented primarily as a threat to the order, and while their tactics might have been discussed, their views were not (p172).
The antiwar movement stood at the bottom of the media's hierarchy of legitimate political actors. And its access to the news and influence over it were still more limited. All exactly what the propaganda model predicts (p172).
As the war progressed, elite opinion gradually shifted to the belief that the U.S. intervention was a "tragic mistake" that was proving too costly. Expressible opinion in the media broadened to

accommodate these judgements, but the righteousness of the cause and nobility of intent were rarely subject to question (p172).

At the war's end, the liberal media could voice the lament that "the high hopes and wishful idealism with which the American nation had been born… had been chastened by the failure of America to work its will in Indochina. But no conflict can be perceived between "wishful idealism" and the commitment to "work our will" in foreign lands (p173).

A major charge is that reporting was too "pessimistic". This charge presupposes that the media must not only accept the framework of government propaganda, b ut must also be upbeat and enthusiastic about the prospects for success in a cause that is assumed without discussion to be honorable and just (p173).

This basic assumption endures throughout, and provides the basic framework for discussion and news reports. The harshest critics within the mainstream media, held that the war began with "blundering efforts to do good", although "by 1969" it had become "clear to most of the world that the intervention had been a disastrous mistake" (p173).

A PBS television series describes the American war as "a failed crusade" undertaken for aims that were "noble" although "illusory" and "motivated by the loftiest intentions": specifically, the commitment to "defend South Vietnam's independence" (p173).

We do not find the slightest recognition that the familiar pieties of state propaganda might be subject to some question. David Fromkin and James Chace assert without argument that "the American decision to intervene in Indochina was predicated on the view that the United States has a duty to look beyond its purely national interests", and that pursuant to its "global responsiblities", the United States must "serve the interests of mankind" (p174).

The moral imperatives of our service "to the interests of mankind" do not, however, require that we intervene to overthrow governments that are slaughtering their own populations, such as our Guatemalan and Salvadoran clients of the 1980s.

Fromkin and Chace are dissatisfied with the inability of the media to gain "effective control over the population". Quite generally, insofar as the debate over the war could reach the mainstream during the war or since, it was bounded on one side by the "hawks" who felt with sufficient dedication the United States c ould succeed in "defending South Vietnam", "controlling the population" and thus establishing "American style democracy" there (p175).

The other side were the doves who doubted that success c ould be achieved in these nobel aims at reasonable cost, and later arrived the "owls" who observed the proceedings judiciously without succumbing to the illusions of either extreme of this wrenching controversy (p175).

Reporting and interpretation of the facts were framed in accordance with these principles (p175).

The Wild Men in the Wings

As the elite consensus eroded in the late 1960s, criticism of the "noble cause" on grounds of its lack of success became more acceptable. The category of "wild men in the wings" narrowed to those who opposed the war on grounds of principle (p175).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

In sharp contrast to soviet aggression, it was standard practice throughout the Indochina war for journalists to report Washington pronouncements as fact, even in the ex treme caqse when official statements were known to be false (p177).

This practice persisted through the period when the media had allegedly become “a notable new source of national power” threatening government authority. Throughout the Indochina wars, when official statements were questioned, it was generally on the basis of U.S. military sources in the field, so that reporting and analysis remained will within the bounds set by U.S. power (p177).

Only very rarely did U.S. reporters make any effort to see the war from the point of view of “the enemy” – the peasants of South Vietnam. Such evidence as was available was dismissed or ignored. In reporting on the Soviet war in Afghanistan, it was considered essential and proper to observe it from the st andpoint of the victims (p177).

But in the case of Indochina, it was the American invaders who were regarded as the victims of the “aggression” of the Vietnamese, and the war was reported from their point of view, just as sub sequent commentary, including cinema, views the war from this perspective (p177).

Refugee testimony, which could have provided much insight into the nature of the war, was also regularly ignored. The enemy of the U.S. government was the enemy of the press. To a substantial extent, the war was reported from Washington (p177).

The search for “opposing viewpoints” as things went wrong was also extremely narrow, limited to the domain of tactics – that is, limited to the question of whether the policy worked, viewed entirely from the standpoint of U.S. interests, and with official premises taken as a given (p178).

In contrast to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the United Nations never condemned the U.S. “intervention”, nor did it investigate or denounce the crimes committed in the course of U.S. military operations. The ideas that we were defending nothing beyond our right to impose our will by violence is completely beyond the range of the thinkable in the American mass media (p179).

The Kennedy administration escalated the war in South Vietnam, engaging U.S. military forces directly in bombing, defoliation, and advising combat troops as part of an effort to drive several million people into concentration camps in which they could be “protected” behind barbed wire and armed guard (p180).

The U.S. air operations of the early 1960s, involved indiscriminate killing and took a heavy toll of essentially innocent men, women and children, in a manner that Orwell would have appreciated: villages in “open zones” were “subjected to random bombardment by artillery and aircraft so as to drive the inhabitants into the safety of the concentration camps – stragetic hamlets (p181).

Virtually all parties concerned, apart from the United States, were making serious efforts in the early 1960s to avoid an impending war by neutralizing South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. But the United States was committed to preventing any political settlement (p181).

Unable to develop any political base in the south, the U.S. government proceeded to expand the war. It was able to do this by continually manipulating the political scene in South Vietnam to assure the attainment of its objective: continued fighting until an anti-Communist regime, susceptible to American will, was established in the South (p181).

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General Maxwell Taylor spoke quite frankly about the need of “establishing some reasonably satisfactory government”, replacing it if we are not satisfied, either with civilians or with “a military dictatorship”. The U.S. media continued to pretend that the governement of South Vietnam was a free choice of the South Vietnamese people (p182).

In fact, the rulers at the moment had been imposed by the United States, the election was a U.S. idea, and t he Sout h Vietnamese who constituted the only “ truly mass-based political party in South Vietnmam” were not considered on of the “South Vietnamese political factions” (p182).

As for the “unity” sought by the United States, it was intended solely to provide a base for prosectution of the U.S. war. The United States invaded outright in early 1965. By the time of the U.S. land invasion in 1965, over 150,000 people had been killed in South Vietnam, most of them “under the crushing weight of American armor, naplam, jet bombers and finally vomiting gases (p183).

By 1967, the war had reached such a level of devastation that Vietnam as a cultural and historic entity was threatened with extinction. The countryside literally died under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleased on an areas of this size (p183).

U.S. forces undertook a mass-murder operation that demolished much of what was left of the peasant society while killing tens of thousands and extending t he destruction of the country. Much of North Vietnam was turned into a moonscape, and Laos was battered under the heaviest bombing in history (p184).

The United States bombed and invaded Cambodia, destorying much of the countryside and mobilizing embittered peasants to the cause of the Khemer Rouge, previously a marginal force. By the war’s end, the death toll in Indochina may have reached four million or more and the land and societies were utterly devastated (p184).

Applying the principles that we rightly adopt in the case of Soviet aggression, the conclusion seems obvious. The United States attacked South Vietnam, expanding its aggression to all of Indochina with lethal and long-term effects (p184).

Media coverage or other commentary on these events that does not begin by recognizing these essential facts is mere apologetics for terrorism and murderous aggression. The United States was “defending South Vietnam” in the same sense in which he Soviet Union was “defending Afghanistan” (p184).

There was much debate during the war over whether the North Vietnamese were guilty of aggression in Vietnam, but there was no discussion of whether the United States was guilty of aggression in its direct attack against South Vietnam, then all of Indochina (p184).

These intriguing facts reflect the overwhelming dominance of the state propaganda system and its ability to set the terms of thought and discussion, even for those who believe themselves to be taking an “adversarial stance” (p185).

As for the media, departures from these doctrinal principles were negligible; indeed, they may well have been literally zero in the vast coverage and commentary on the war, while it was in progress or since (p185).

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The Early Stages: A Closer Look

Surveying the media during the period 1955-1956 there was virtually no news coverage about the U.S. policy of undermining the Geneva Accords in the New York Times and the three newsweeklies. More generally, through 1956, the press insured that the reading public would view the war as a struggle between Communism and the Free World (p187).

State doctrine was never challgned by editors or columnists. The liberal press showed particular enthusiasm for the cause, and news stories also reinforced the preconceptions of the Administration because the press relied almost completely on Administration sources for information which was reported (p187).

The terms of the future debate over U.S. policy were being hardened into usage by the press. With peaceful settlement successfully deterred, the United States and its client regime turned to the task of internal repression, killing tens of thousand and imprisoning tens of thousands more (p188).

The main target of the repression was the anti-French resistance, the Viet Minh, which wsa virtually decimated by the late 1950s. The U.S. had to shift the struggle away from the political arena, where it was weak, to the arena of violence, where it was strong (p188).

The government terrorized far more than did the revolutionary movement – for example, by liquidations of former Vietminh by artillery and grou nd attacks on "communist villages", and by roundups of "communist sympathizers" (p188).

What attracted people to the revolutionary movement was that it represented a new society in which there would be an individual redistribution of values, including power and status as well as material possessions (p189).

The growth of antiwar and neutralist sentiment in the Saigon-controlled areas in 1964 came at a time when virtually all Vietnamese factions, along with international opinion g enerally, were seeking a political solution among Vietnamese that would head off the impending war to which the United States was committed because of its recognition that it had no political base in South Vietnam (p189).

The generals did not want to continue to fight. They wanted to move as rapidly as possible towards transferring the struggle for power in the Sou th from the military to the political level, leading to a negotiated agreement among the Vietnamese parties themselves – without American intervention (p189).

But none of this was acceptable to the United States. President Johnson explained to Ambassador Lodge that his mission was "knowcking down the idea of neutralization wherever it rears its ugly head", because neutralism appeared to mean throwing the internal political situation open and thus inviting Communist participation (p190).

For the United States to 'compromise' and permit the indigenous forces of Vietnam to work their own way would be to condone the demise of the anti-Communist regime we had supported in Saigon for twenty years (p190).

Increasingly, U.S. Planners turned to the policy of expanding the war to the North in the hope that this would compensate for their political weakness. No such conception of the evolving events and their meaning, was ever made accessible through the mainstream media, which kept to the official line that

the United States was pursuing limited measures “to strengthen South Vietnam against “Communist aggression”.
In the New York Times version, the United States was leading “the free world’s fight to contain aggressive Communism”, defending the South against proxy armies of Soviet Russia. The peasant support for the South Vietnamese “aggressors” and the reasons for it were ignored (p191).
Concern over Vietnamese “aggression” never abated. “How, then”, James Reston asked “is this aggression by subversion to be stopped?” – referring to aggression by Vietnamese against the American invaders and their clients (p192).
It is taken for granted that the Americans had every right to be marauding in a region of Vietnam where “Everything in this area for years was Vietcong”. A television report on Operation Attleboro described the fighting as raging “once again to preserve democracy” (p192).
Throughout the period 1954 to 1965, the media presented the U.S. intervention entirely within the framework predicted by a propaganda model. Given the conformism and obedience of the media during this crucial period, it is small wonder that public concern was so slight, and that opposition was so negligible as to be entirely without significance (p192).
In this dismal record we see very clearly the consequences of mindless media obedience in a state with enormous resources of violence (p193).

Reporting on the War

As the invasion mounted in scale and intensity, Indochina was flooded with correspondents who, with rare exceptions, gave an account of the war as perceived by the U.S. military on the ground or as offered in press briefings (p193).
In the home offices, Washington’s version prevailed until elite divisions within the United States expanded the range of tactical debate. Malcom Browne quotes a U.S. official who describes B-52 strikes in the South as “the most lucrative raides made at any time during the war”: (p193).
“Every single bomb crater is surrounded with bodies, wrecked equipment and dazed and bleeding people. At one such hole there were 40 or 50 men, all in green North Vietnamese uniforms but without their weapons, lying around in an obvious state of shock. We sent in helicopter gunships, which quickly put them out of their miser” (p193).
There was little reaction in the media when B-52 raids in the populous Mekong delta were reported in 1965, with unknown numbers of civilian casualties and horeds of regugees fleeing to government controlled areas “because they could no longer bear the continuous bombing” (p194).
The victims fell under the category of “the unfortunate accidental loss of life incurred by the efforts of American military forces to help the South Vietnamese repel the incursion of North Vietnam and its partisans” (p194).
Not only was there no reaction to these and subsequent atrocities, but there was also no attempt to place them in context – that is, to make them intelligible. There was little awareness of the background, because the media were so closely wedded to U.S. government goals and perceptions that they never sought to learn the facts (p194).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

As the war progressed, ample evidence became available from U.S. government sources to explain why the United States had been forced to resort to violence. But such materials were inconsistent with the preferred image of the United States defending South Vietnam from Communist terror and aggression (p194).

The reason for the U.S. resort to violence was overwhelmingly clear by the time of the outright U.S. invasion of 1965. As noted, the United States was compelled by the political and social successes of he Southern Viet Minh to shift he struggle away from the political arena, where it was weak, to the arena of violence, where it was strong, a typical response to a classic dilemma (p195).

It is in this context that we can understand the resort to B-52 raids to destroy the civilian base of the indigenous enemy. The media continued to observe and discuss atrocities blandly, not considering them as controversial or as raising any moral issue. In fact, not regarding them as atrocities at all, although we detect no such reserve with regard to the violence of official enemies (p195).

In the Batangan Peninsula, where 12,000 peasants were forced from their homes in an American ground sweepin January 1969, they were shipped off to a waterless camp near Auang Ngai over which floated a banner saying: “We thank you for liberating us from Communist terror” (p196).

The hills that overlooked the flooded paddies, once scattered with huts, were filled with bomb fragments, mines and unexploded artillery shells, and B-52 creaters nearly 20 feet deep pocked he hills. Medical workers at the nearby Canadian-run hospital reported that they knew of the My Lai massacre at once but gave it little attention because it was not out of the oridnary in a province that had been virtually destroyed by U.S. military operations (p197).

The My Lai massacre was ignored when it occurred, and the substantial attention given to it later is a more subtle form of cover-up of atrocities. It was more convenient to focus attention on the actions of semi-crazed Gis in a gruesome combact situation with every Vietnamese civilian a threatening enemy (p198).

The limited but dramatized attention to My Lai was even used to demonstrate the co nscience of America, in the face of enemy provocations. The standard critieque of the media for having “lost the war” identifies television as the major culprit (p199).

For the first six years of television coverage, from 1962 through 1967, the American public did approve of the war in Vietnam. In 1967, in a Harris poll for Newsweek “64 percent of the nation wide sample said that television’s coverage made them more supportive of the American effort, and only 26 percent said that it had intensified their opposition (p199).

The journal was led to the conclusion that “TV has encouraged a decisive majority of viewers to support the war”. At no time during the war or since has there been any detectable departure from unqualified acceptance of the U.S. government propaganda framework (p200).

The combat reports and he government statements generally gave the impression that the Americans were in control, on the offense and holding the initiative, at least until the Tet Offensive in 1968. The most advanced and cruel forms of devastation and killing sucha s the free use of napalm were used with few constraints in the South (p200).

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At least visible areas around the major urban centers in the North were sparred because of international publicity and political complications. The relative bloodlessness of he war depicted on television helped shield the audience form the true horror of the war. And helps explain why only a minority in the Harris-Newsweek poll said that television increased their dissatisfaction with the war (p201).
Throughout this period, television coverage focused almost exclusively on the American effort. The Vietcong and North Vietnamese were almost nonexistent on American television newscasts. Instances shown on TV of American brutality toward the South Vietnamese could be counted on one hand, even thoiugh hundreds of South Vietnamese villages were destroyed during this period (p201).
Returning soldiers told a different story, and it became increasinlgy clear, although not through the medium of television, that the war was bloody and brutal, leading to "disillusionment". The televised picture of gradual progress in the war was abruptly shattered by the Communist Tet offensive in 1968, when the military lost its "control over the movements of the press", who could step outside their hotels and find "themselves willy-nilly in the midst of bloody fighting (p201).
For this brief moment, correspondents sent on-the-spot reports that were aired in place of "the usual carefully edited view of an orderly, controlled war, and the policy of "shielding American viewers from the grisly close-ups of wounded Americans, body bags and death" briefly collapsed (p201).
The Tet offensive convinced U.S. elites that the war was becoming too costly to the United States, and the government shifted toward the policy of "Vietnamization", large-scale massacre operations to destroy the indigenous resistance and its civilian base (p202).
The post-Tet pacification campaign, one of the most crucial and murderous operations in the U.S. war against South Vietnam, received little attention. Up until 1968, television coverage was controlled to a large extent by the American military, and generally it reflected a controlled American initiative which seemed to be winning the countryside and decimating the Vietcong (p202).
Apart from the live coverage during the Tet offensive, there is very little departure from the principle that the war must be viewed from the standpoint determined by oficial Washington doctrine. The unhappiness that had become quite significant by 1968 among business elites, led to the changes in U.S. government policy (p202).
Before Tet, editorial comments by television journalists ran nearly four to one in favor of administraion policy; after Tet, two to one against, reflecting divisions in the establishement itself. The "Wise Men" advised Lyndon Johnson in March 1968 to abandon hope of military victory and to de-escalate the conflict, in the wake of the Tet offensive (p203).
Television typically presented events in terms of a kind of morality play, … a dramatic contrast between good, represented by the American peace offensive, and evil, represented by Hanoi. Reporting was relatively bloodless, focusing on the successes of the good guys: American boys in action, regularly depicted as "brave men", "heroes" exuding competence, humanity, and high morale as they fight against "Communist aggression" in the "battle for democracy", and "win hearts and minds" by caring for sick and injured civilians (p203).

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The political opposition in Vietnam was portrayed with considerable hostility, like the antiwar movement at home. The utterly fraudulent elections were portrayed as a triumph for democracy, courageously carried out in defiance of the disruptive attacks of "Vietcong terrorists" (p203).
Civilian casualties were downplayed, or regarded as unavoidable side consequences of "a job that had to be done", raising no moral questions. Reporting of civilian casualties rose from 1966 to a peak in early 1968, then declined sharply as the United States turned to the murderous accelerated pacification campaign (p204).
The coverage rose again in 1972, when casualties could be attributed to a North Vietnamese offensive and the U.S. "response" (p204).
In contrast to the heroic and humane image of the American soldiers defending democracy , the North Vietnamese were portrayed in an almost perfectly one-dimensional image… as cruel, ruthless and fanatical. When U.S. forces burned villages, this was a necessity because they provided cover and support for the Viet Cong (p205).
The results of B-52 saturation bombing were a "tragedy of war". Although civilian casualties were overwhelmingly the result of U.S. firepower, attribution of responsibility by television was weighted by a 10 to 7 ratio to the account of the enemy; its "calculated policy of terror" contras ted with the unfortunate but legitimate side-effects of U.S. operations (p205).
The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong w ere portrayed as "savage", "brutal", "murderous", "fanatical", "suicidal", "half-crazed", mere vermin in areas that were "Communist infested", or "Vietcong infested", and thus had to be cleansed by the American liberators (p205).
The style and technique are familiar in state propaganda of all varieties. Television never veered from the official interpretation of the war as "a struggle to defend democracy against aggression". In the early years it was taken for granted that we would surely win, not only because we were more powerful but because we had right on our side (p205).
Television held this view strongly, perhaps more strongly than the public itself. It didn't work out that way and eventually television brought the bad news. But it never explained why: it never reexamined the assumptions about the nature of the war it had helped to propagate in the early years (p206).

Some Crucial Events of the War

The Tonkin Gulf Incident

By mid-1964, there was growing consensus among Vietnamese in favor of a negotiated political settlement, while the United States was maneuvering with increasing desperation to evade what internal documents describe as "premature negotiations" (p206).
The reason, as frankly explained, was that the United states was politically isolated. It was therefore regarded as necessary to expand the war to the North. Intelligence, meanwhile, concluded that "the basic elements of Communist st rength in South Vietname remain indigenous (p206).
On August 5, 1964, president Johnson publicly denounced the "open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America" by the North Vietnamese. China stated that the so-called Tonkin Gulf incident of August 4 never occurred (p207).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

Congress passed a resolution authorizing the president to “take all necessary measures to repel any armeed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression”. The escalation was exploited as the basis for the escalation of the U.S. attack against Vietnam (p208).
On virtually every important point, the reporting of the two Gulf of Tonkin incidents was either misleading or simply false. Neither the New York Times nor the Washington Post mentioned these facts. The reporting was objective in that it correctly reported U.S. government statements, raising no question about them, nor presenting no relevant background (p208).
The newsweeklies adhered still more rigidly to the government propaganda line, even providing vivid and dramatic accounts of the August 4 incident, which apparently never took place. North Vietnamese and Chinese reactions were dismissed as “bluster” by Communists who “boiled with hatred and hostility toward the U.S.” (p208).
The U.S. government version was simply adopted as unquestioned truth, with no further discussion or inquiry necessary (p209).
There were ample grounds at the time for suspicion about the U.S. government version. In the United States, the left-wing National Guardian and I.F. Stone’s Weekly provided the most extensive, careful, and accurate account of events (p209).
In contrast to the fevered rhetoric of the mainstream newsweeklies, the National Guardian simply described the facts that were available, asking wihether the August 4 incident had taken place. The relevant background and Communist versions were accurately presented, with appropriate questions raised (p209).
I.F. Stone’s weekly also reported the facts accurately, adding relevant background ignored by the major media. Overall, the national media, obercome by jingoist passion, failed to provide even minimally adequate coverage of this c rucial event, although appropriate skepticism would have been aroused in the mind of the reader of he foreign or “alternative” media (p209).
The Pentagon Papers noted that “the Tonkin Gu lf Resolution set U.S. public support for virtually any action”. The willingness of the media to serve as a vehicle for government propaganda helped impel the country toward what they were later to regard as “the tragedy” of Vietnam (p209).
The reaction of Congress and the public laid the basis for the out right invasion of early 1965. When the United States extended the war in early 1965 to try to salvage its position in the South, the media continued to offer total support (p210).
The United States then proceeded to fight a long and brutal war to try to achieve its objectives in Vietnam, demolising much of Indochina in the process and leaving a legacy that may never be overcome. Finally, in January 1973, the United States formally accepted a peace treaty that was virtually identical with the Vietnamese consensus it overturned by violence in 1964 (p210).
The media bear a major responsiblility for these tragic events, coverage of the Tonkin Gulf incident with its congressional “blank check” for further aggression se rving as a notable example (p210).

The Tet Offensive

Media coverage of the Tet offensive has been the centerpiece of the critique of the media for “losing the war” by their incompetent reporting and their anti-government bias reflecting their passion for

confronting authority. The authoritative “proof” of this contention was provided in the two=volume Freedom House study by peter Brasestrup (p211).

The study was hailed as a “monumental work” in the Washington Post. According to the study, it was the “Big Event” on television that changed our minds about the war in Vietnam. The Braestrup-Freedom House thesis has two essential components: (1) coverage of the Tet offensive illustrates media incompetence and their “adversarial stance”; and (2) by their portrayal of an American victory as a defeat, the media bear responsibility for the loss of American resolve and the subsequent American d efeat in Vietnam (p212).

It is the second component of the thesis that carries the dramatic impact, and that has permitted it to set so much of the agenda for subsequent discussion of the fourth estate and the dangers that its new-found power and “sixties-style” of “mindless” hatred of authority pose for the very survival of free institutions and democracy (p213).

An analysis of the facts and the argument demonstrates that neither component of the Freedom House thesis is tenable. The thesis illustrates the subservience of the media to the state propaganda system. The analysis, laced with bitter sarcasm throughout, is thoughroughly undermined when co mpared with the actual documents (p214).

When the countless errors and careless and inaccurate comments are corrected, nothing remains of the Freedom House case. The sardonic referrence to “straw man journalism” referring to the alleged misdeeds of the media is misplaced case by case (p214).

That the United States has a right to conduct military operations in South Vietnam, that its goals are democracy and self-determination, and that its forces “protect” and “bring security” to South Vietnamese peasants are principles taken for granted in the Breaestrup-Freedom House version (p214). Braestrup mindlessly adopts a patriotic agenda, even more so than the media he condemns. The function of such “flak machines” as Freedom House is to ensure that the press stays within the bounds of this patriotic agenda (p214).

The Tet offensive of January 1968 began on January 21 with a siege by North Vietnamese regulars of a U.S. military base at Khe Sanh. It was soon apparent that the purpose was to draw U.S. forces away from populated centers, and the siege succeeded in this aim (p214).

The Tet offensive left Washington in a state of “troubled confusion and uncertainty”. Johnson and his advisers were shocked by the suddenness and magnitude of the offensive. An “air of gloom” hung over white house discussions” (p216).

These internal assessments are considerably more “pessimistic” than those of the media and are denounced for the crime of excessive pessimism by Freedom House standards (p216).

Even before the Tet offensive, Defense Secretary McNamara had privately concluded that military victory was an unreasonable objective and that the course of the war should be changed. To establish the “stab-in-the-back” component of the Freedom House thesis, it is necessary to show that public opinion was swayed toward opposition to the war by media coverage, and that the media and public opinion were a significant factor in the shift of government policy. Neither claim can be sustained (p217).

Chomsky, Noam. Herman, Edward (1988). Manufacturing Consent. Vintage Books, London.

The immediate reaction of the U.S. public to the Tet offensive was to favor stiffened resistance and intensified U.S. effort. The major sentitment aroused was “Bomb the hell out of them”. When the impact of the alleged media “distortions” and “pessimism” reached its peak, public opinion shifted towards the “hawks” (p217).

The Tet offensive appears merely to have caused a minor ripple in a steadily changing attitude toward our involvement in the war. Tet was just one more incident that reminded the public that the war was not going well, and helped move public opinion in the anti-war direction in which it had been moving for nearly three years (p218).

The Tet offensive, as portrayed by the media, appeared to have had a far greater effect on political Washing ton and the Administration itself thatn on the U.S. population’s sentiment on the war. We are asked to believe that Washington’s decision to move toward disengagement was based not on military briefings, intelligence reports, and all the information available at the highest level, but on watching the evening news (p218).

We are left with the conclusion that the media were either irrelevant, or that they continued to operate within the general confines of the approved ideological system. All that remains of the Freedom House story is the possiblility that the media were incompetent, but ineffectual (p218).

If television is as influential as claimed, then the evidence shows that through 1967 it encouraged a decisive majority of viewers to support the war. With lavish use of firepower, U.S. forces succeeded in regaining control of the towns and cities (p219).

The city of Hue was 80 percent destroyed by bombing and shelling, which left 2000 civilians buried in the “smashed ruins”. The Tet offensive not only reduced Washington to gloomy despair but also changed the character of media reporting and commentary, which mirrored the changes in elite opinion (p220).

On the ground, American correspondents were able to witness the war at first hand, gaining a view rather different from the sanitized and edited versions presented under the control of the American military command (p220).

Media commentary at home reflected elite opinion in recognizing that the optimistic forecasts that had been relayed from Washington were inaccurate, and that a long and bitter war lay ahead. But on-the-scene reporting and domestic commentary never veered from the framework of the state propaganda system (p220).

Recall that we are now evaluating the remaining component of the Freedom house thesis: that the media were suppressing the American victory in their antiestablishment zeal. In fact, they were reporting the story accurately in a narrow sense, but completely within the framework of the government propaganda system – never questioned, in a shameful display of media servility (p221).

Braestrup’s final comment that “a free society deserves better” of its media is accurate enough, although not in quite in the sense intended in the Freedom House study. As throughout the war, the standpoint of the media continued to reflect the perceptions and attitudes of the American military (p221).

It was feared that it might not be an easy task to convince the populace that the Communists were to blame for the slaughter and destruction by U.S. forces. An IVS worker quoted in Newsweek said: “As

difficult as this may be to believe, not a single Vietnamese I have met in Saigon or in the Delta blames the Viet Cong for the events of the past two weeks" (p223).
The hope was that the Vietnamese people would blame he communists rather than the Americans for whatever damage was done. While the U.S. media rarely strayed from the framework of he state propaganda system, others were unconstrained by these limits: for example, the Le Monde correspondnets concluded that the thousands of civilian victims of the reconquest of Hue "were killed by the most hysterical use of American firepower ever seen" and then designated "as the victims of a communist massacre (p224).
The media reports that Braestrup derides were rarely as "pessimistic" as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whose summary of the situation led the president to order "the initiation of a complete and searching reassessment of the entire U.S. strategy and commit ment in Sout h Vietnam", the Pentagon Papers analyst reports (p225).
It is significant that the major criticism of the media in the Freedom House study is that they were too pessimistic. The internal reports from the field and analysis by intelligence and official Washington were even more pessimistic (p226).
The logic of the Freedom House brief against the media is highly revealing. In their view, the media in a free society must not only accept without question the principles of the state doctrinal system, as the media did throughout, but must do so with a degree of enthusiasm and optimism that exceeds that of U.S. intelligence and the military command (p226).
It is an interesting conception of a "free society". By Freedom House standards, it is plain that the editors merit severe censure for their "adversarial stance", "pessimism" and "volatile styles". The following conclusions seem reasonable: (p227).
1. media performance was creditable, sometimes highly so, in a narrow sense.
2. This reporting was highly deceptive in that it was framed within the unchallenged and unrecognized doctrines of the state propaganda system, which impose a severe distortion.
3. Media reports compare favorably in accuracy with those available to official Washington at the highest level.
4. The reports from the scene led media commentators to draw approximately the same conclusions as Johnson's high level advisers.
5. The manner in which the media covered the events had little effect on public opinion, except perhaps to enhance its aggressiveness and, of course, to instill ever more deeply the basic and unexamined tenets of the propaganda system (p227).
The propaganda model is vindicated by the manner in which Freedom House fulfills its function as a flak machine, attempting to bully the media into a still more throroughgoing conformity with the propaganda requirements of state policy. All of course in the interests of "freedom" (p228).

The Paris Peace Agreements

The Tet offensive convinced large sectors of elite opinion that the costs of the U.S. effort were too high. Lyndon Johnson stepped down. Opportunities for a peaceful diplomatic settledment had long

existed, but they had never been pursued because they were regarded as inconsistent with the essential goal: preservation of an “independent” South Vietnam that would be a U.S. client state (p228).
By October 1972, the negotiators in Paris had reached the essential terms of an agreement – the 9-point plan. President Nixon, however, objected to the terms of the agreement. Nixon’s hope was to delay further negotiations until after the November Presidential elections, when he would have more leverage (p229).
From its earliest days, the war was fought over the question of whether “the South Vietnamese people shall decide themselves the political future of South Vietnam or whether the United States would enforce the rule of its client regime (p229).
Kissinger’s announcement that “peace is at hand”, designed with the upcoming U.S. presidential elections in mind, was also a blatant deception. As his distortion of the essential terms of the agreement clearly revealed, the United States was backing away from the settement and refusing to implement it (p229).
The media characteristically accepted Kissinger’s version of the agreement with no recognition that it was diametrically opposed to the terms of the 9-Point plan. The media adopted the version of events as relayed regularly by Kissinger, depicting him as caught between two irrational adverseries, Hanoi and Saigon (p230).
After the military and political failures of the Christmas bombings, the U.S. government then signed the January peace agreements, which were virtually identical to the terms that it had rejected the preceding October (p230).
Kissinger had a lengthy press conference in which he explained clearly that the United States was planning to reject every essential provision of the accords the administration had been compelled to sign. In yet another astonishing demonstration of servility, the media accepted the Kissinger-White House version unquestioningly, thus guaranteeing that the Vietnamese enemy would appear to be violating t he agreements if it adhered to them (p230).
The Paris Agreements committed “the United States and all other countries to respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam” (p230).
Kissinger made it clear that the United States maintained the right to provide “civilian technicians serving in cert ain of the military branches. and to keep or introduce 7,200 “contract civilians”, many of them “retired military men”, under the supervision of the U.S. major-general (p231).
The provisions concerning technical personnel were thus at once nullified, along w ith the U.S. pledge to refrain from any intervention “in the I nternal affairs of South Vietnam” (p231).
With these declarations, the United States and its client regime thus nullified the central principle of the Paris Agreements. In short, the United States announced at once, clearly and without equivocation, that it intended to disregard every essential provision of the scrap of paper it was compelled to sign in Paris (p232).

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Just as in October, the purpose of this obfuscation was, in Nixon's words, "to make sure that our version of the agreement was the one that had great public impact". The media accepted the Kissinger-White House version as expressing he co ntents of the agreements (p233).
An honest and independent prress would have announced the January agreements with headlines reading: "U.S. Announces Intention to Violate the Agreements Signed in Paris". An informed press would have observed further that the Paris Agreements incorporate the principles rejected by the United States at Geneva twenty years earlier (p234).
The actual press simply adopted Washington's version of the agreements, never mentioning that this version contradicted them in every essential respect and thus guaranteed that the war would go on – as it did (p234).
Once again, the contribution of the media was to help implement futher violence and suffering by adopting washington's version of events. One would have to search assiduously to discover a more blatant example of media surbservience to state power (p234).
This useful lesson, firmly established by media complicity in transparnet government deceit, has, been applied in subsequent efforts by the US government to gain its ends by violence. The servility of the media made a significant contribution to ensuring that the slaughter in Indochina would continue and that the U.S. government would be able to exploit its "vietnam experience", as filtered through the media, for later exercises in international terrorism (p236).
The remarkable performance of the media also laid the basis for the postwar interpretation of "what the war was all about" and why the United states failed to attain its ends (p236).

The Vietnam War in Retrospect

In April 1975, the war came to an e nd, and the thirty-year conflict entered a new phase. Through the mid-sixties, the media loyally fulfilled their function of service to state violence, and there was no significant popular opposition to the U.S. attack on Indochina (p237).
By 1967, the popular mood was shifting, and the public was beginning to defy the hawk-dove consensus of elites, a matter of much government concern. The Pentagon warned that a request for more troops might lead to "increased defiance of the draft and growing unrest in the cities", running the risk of "provoking a domestic crisis of unprecendented proportions" (p237).
"The sight of thousands of peaceful demonstrators being confronted by troops in battle gear" during "the massive anti-war demonstration" and "massive march on the Pentagon", was particularly disturbing, the Pentagon Papers analyst observed (p238).
As late as 1982, 72 percent of the public regarded the Vietnam War as "more than a mistake; it was fundamentally wrong and immoral". The primary task facing the ideological institutions in the postwar period was to convince the errant public that the war was "less a moral crime than a thunderously stupid military blunder of throwing half a million ground troops into an unwilnnable war", the New York Times explained (p238).
The ancillary task has been to keep the devastation that the United States left as its legacy in Indochina hidden from public view. One finds only scattered reference to this in the main stream media. Keeping just to Vietnam, the deathtoll mayhave passed three million (p238).
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In the South, 9000 out of 15,000 hamlets wree damaged or destroyed, along with some twenty-five million acres of farmland and twelve million acres of forest. One-and-a=half million cattle were killed and the war left a million widows and some 800,000 orphans (p239).
Much of the land is a moonscape, where people live on the edge of famine, with rice rations lower than those in Bangladesh. There was little hint of any of this in mainstream U.S. media coverage. Rather, with remarkable uniformity and self-righteousness, the problems of reconstruction are attributed solely to Communist brutality and ineptitude (p240).
The sole remaining interest in postwar Vietnam in the U.S. media has been the recovery of remains of U.S. personnel presumed to be killed in action, the Vietnamese preoccupation with other matters serving as further proof of their moral insensitivity (p240).
In one of his sermons on human rights, President Carter explained that we owe Vietnam no debt and hve no responsibility to render it any assistance because "the destruction was mutual". This statement elicted no comment from the media – a fact that speaks volumes about the prevailing cultural climate (p240).
We owe no debt for mass slaughter and for leaving three countries in ruins, no debto to the millions of maimed and orphaned, to the peasants who died soon after from exploding ordinance left from the U.S. assault. Rather, our moral debt results only from the fact that we did not win (p240).
I"It's about time the Vietnamese demonstrated some good will, said Charles Printz, of Human Rights Advocates International, referring to negotiations about the American children who constitute a tiny fraction of the victims of U.S. aggression in Indochina (p241).
Since we were s imply defending ourselves from "internal aggression" in Vietnam, it surrely makes sense to consider ourselves the victims of the Vietnamese (p241). So profound is the American commitment to humanitarian imperatives and moral values that it cannot permit lofty ideals to be tainted by associating them with such trivial concerns such as requests for food-aid (p241).
Opponents of the war at that time and for several years after included frew representatives of mainstream liberalism. The Wall Street Journal, for example, refers to "the $180 million in chemical companies' compensation to Agent Orange victims" – U.S. soldiers, not the South Vietnamese vistimes whose suffering was and remains vastly greater (p242).
Time goes so far as to calim that the "suberversion" was "orchestrated" by Moscow, so that the United States had to send troops to "defend" South Vietnam. Throughout the war, elite groups remained loyal to the cause, apart from expressing qualms about the bombing of North Vietnam, which was regarde d as problematic since it might lead to a broader conflict (p243).
The massacre of innocents is a problem only among enotional or irresponsible types, or among the "aging adolenscents on college faculties who found it rejuvenating to plys 'revolution'". Descent and respectable people remain silent and obedient (p243).
We read in the news media that the opponents of the war "brandished moral principles and brushed aside complexity", but heard nothing of what they had to say – as whas the case throughout the war. A current pretense is that principled critics of the war had access to the mainstream media during these years. In fact, they were almost entirely excluded (p244).

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Exactly as one would expect in a properly functioning system of indoctrination with the task of preserving privilege and authority from critical analysis. The Times explained that Israel's invasion of Lebanon was a "liberation", always carefully excluding Lebanese opinion on the matter as obviously irrelevant (p244).
The United States thought it was "resisting" Communists "when it intervened in Indochina", how we "resist" the natives defending their homes from our attack, the Times does not explain (p244).
The United States did not achieve its maximal goals in Indochina, but it did gain a partial victory. The primary U.S. concern was not Indochina but the "domino effect" that might cause the "rot to spread". This threat was averted (p245).
While proceeding to extirpate the "rot" of successful independent development in Indochina, the United States backed a military coup in Indonesia. Amnerican liberals and freedom house lauded the "dramatic changes" that took place there – the most dramatic being the massacre of hundreds of thousands of landless peasants and the destruction of the only mass-based political party – as proof that the U.S. was right to defend South Vietnam by demolishing it (p245).
The United States won a regional victory, and even a substantial local victory in Indochina, left in ruins. The U.S. victory was particularly significant within South Vietnam, where the peaant-based revolutionary forces were decimated and the rural society was demolished (p246).
That the United States suffered a "defeat" in Indochina is a natural perception on the part of those of limitless ambition, who understand "defeat" to mean the achievement only of major goals, while certain minor ones remain beyond our grasp (p247).
Postwar U.S. policy has been designed to ensure that the victory is maintained by maximizing suffering and oppression in Indochina, which then evokes further gloating in the United States. Since the destruction is "mutual", we are entitled to deny reparations, aid, and trade and to b lock development funds (p247).
The extent of U.S. sadism is noteworthy, as is the null reaction to it. The Carter administration even denied rice to Laos, where the agricultural system was destroyed by U.S. bombing. Oxfam America was not permitted to send ten solar pumps to Cambodia for irrigation in 1983. In 1981, the U.S. government sought to block a shipment of school supplies and educational kits to Cambodia by the Mennonite Church (p247).
We are not to believe that the United States was invading South Vietnam. Rather, we must assume, as a given fact not subject to debate, that the U.S. commitment was to "defend South Vietnam".
American aircraft dropped six times more bombs on South Vietnam than on the Communist North and most of the enemy troops were native Southerners (p251).
The war was a "tragic error" but not "fundamentally wrong and immoral", as the overwhelming majority of the American people continue to believe. Principled objection to the war as "fundamentally wrong and immoral", or as outright criminal aggression – a war crime – is inexpressible.
It is not part of the spectrum of discussion. The background for such a principled critique cannot be developed in the media, and the conclusions cannot be drawn. It is not even present even to be refuted. Rather, the idea is unthinkable.

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All of this again reveals how foreign to the mobilized media is a conception of the media as a free sys tem of information and discussion, independent of state authority and elite interests (p252).

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The Indochina Wars: Laos and Cambodia

The Geneva Accords of 1954 provided for a political settlement in Laos and Cambodia. Both countries were drawn into the U.S. attack on Indochina, with devastating consequences. In both cases, the media made a noteworthy contribution to this outcome (p253).

Laos

The "not-so-gentle" land: some relevant history

Behind the famous "Khmer smile" lies ample bitterness and violence. For the rural 80-90 percent of the Cambodian people, arbitary justice, sudden violent death, political oppression and exploitative use of religion were common facts of life long before the war and revolution of the 1970s. These condtions eliticted no interest in the West (p267).

The creations of Pol Pot-ism were all there in embryo, directed directed first of all at the urban population. For the United States, the destruction of rural Cambodia was ancillary to the goal of maintaining in power the client regime in South Vietnam (p267).

By 1963, CIA-backed Khmer Serei forces frequently attacked Cambodia from Sout h Vietnamese and Thai bases at a ti me when the United States was intensifying its clandestine operations in Laos and maneuvering, with increasing violence, to block a political settlement in South Vietnam (p268).

Attacks by U.S. and Saigon army forces against border posts and villages in Cambodia intensified from the early 1960s, causing hundreds of casualties a year. The Cambodian government coplained to the United Nations that on February 24, 1967, a large number of American armed forces fired heavily on the Khmer village of Chrak Kranh, which was invaded and burnt (p269).

Virtually none of this wa ever reported in the United States although information was readily available in official documents and reputable foreign sources, and in easily ignored peace-movement literature (p269).

Phase 1: The U.S. destruction of Cambodia

On march 18, 1969, the notorious "secret bombings" began. One week later, on March 26, the Cambodian government publicly condemned the bombing of the cambodian population almost daily by U.S. aircraft (p270).

Once again, the U.S. escalation of the war against Cambodia in 1969 coincided with similar efforts in Laos and Vietnam. In March 1970, Cambodia was drawn irrevocably into the carnage sweeping Indochina (p272).

One effect of the invasion was to drive the Vietnamese forces away from the border and deeper into cambodia. A second effect was that "the bombing and shooting was radicalizing the people of rural Cambodia and was turning the countryside into a massive, dedicated, and effective revolutionary base (p272).

U.S. bombing continued at a high level after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia. By late 1971, an investigatieve team of the General Accounting Office co ncluded that U.S. bombing was "a very significant cause of refugees and civilian casualties", estimating that almost a third of the seven-million population may have become refugees (p272).

There were refugees with stories to tell, but the media was not interested. As in Laos, the escalating war remained largely "invisible" in the media. In terms of war casualties, the focus of the New York Times and Time was on military-related deaths and almost always only those that occurred in Vietnam (p273).

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Time had more coverage on civilian casualties in Northern Ireland during the first half of 1972 than it did on the Indo-China war. Meanwhile, Cambodia was being systematically demolished, and the Khmer Rouge were becom ing a significant force with substantial peasant support in inner Cambodia, increasingly victimized by U.S. terror (p273).

In early 1973, U.S. bombing increased to a scale that might truly merit the term "genocidal" used by the Finnish Inquiry Commission. In the five-month period after the signing of the Paris peace accords, the bombing matched the level of the preceding three years (p273).

Phase 1 – the American invasion in the Media

The enemy struggled on successfully against overwhelming odds, baffling the Americans – exactly as Americans building "democracy" have been baffled by the same problem in South Vietnam, Central America, and many other places (p275).

As in Laos a few years earlier, from the point of view of the media, he refugees simply had the wrong tale to tell, and the kinds of stories that readily flow if one is sufficiently interested to inquire are lacking here (p276).

"The frightened villagers uprooted by the bombing have a great deal to say", but we do not read it in the news reports by the mass media. The reader could no doubt ascertain that terrible things were happening in the Cambodian countryside, but what they were remains obscure, and the Americans are explicitly exonerated (p278).

British correspondent Jon Swain said, "the united states has much to answer for here, not only in terms of human lives and massive material destruction. The war damage here is everywhere and is total. Not a bridge standing, hardly a house. The entire countryside has been churned up by American B-52 bomb craters, whole towns and villages razed (p279).

The conditions were much like those reported in 1970 by refugees from Laos; in both cas es, these accounts were entirely excluded from the mainstream media. "Memory is the answer" but only when focused on proper targets far from home. (p280).

The Pol Pot era

Phase 2 of the "decade of the genocide" began with the Khmer Rough takeover in April 1975. Within a few weeks, the Khmer Rouge were accused in the national press of "barbarous cruelty" and "genocidal policies" (p280).

This was at a time w hen the death toll was perhaps in the thousands; the half million or more killed during phase 1 – the American invasion, never merited such comment. It is not enough to denounce official enemies; it is also necessary to guard with vigilance the right to lie in the service of power (p282).

The comparison between Timor and phase 2 in Cambodia is particularly striking. The excuses now produced for this refulsa to report what was happening in Timor are instructive – "a compartive lack of sources" and lack of access to refugees (p285).

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The media preferred "facts" offered by the State Department and Indonesian generals. Similarly, the media ignored readily available regugee studies, and disregarded highly credible witnesses who reached New York and Washington along with evidence from church sources and others (p285).
The coverage of Ti mor actu ally declined sharply as massacres increased with mounting U.S. support.

Phase 3 in Indochina – Cambodia and the bleeding of Vietnam

Western moralists remained silent as their government provided the means for Indonesia to continue its campaign of terror and repression in Timor. We suppported both the Khmer Rough and the Indonesian generals (p285).
The U.S. support for the Khmer Rouge merited little attention in the media. U.S. aid to the Khmer Rouge was reported by congressional sources to be extensive. The Reagan administration refused to back the efforts of the Southeast Asian allies (p286).
The U.S. forced the Vietnamese to stay in Cambodia because that weay they would suffer more and more and not be able to extend their hand to Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. The motive of "bleeding Vietnam" to ensure that it did not recover from its victimization at the hands of the West has additional advantages (p287).
By acting in such a way as to enhance suffering and repression in Indochina, the U.S. demonstrated retrospectively the "benevolence" of their "noble crusade" of earlier years. The Cambodians were "worthy victims" when they were being terrorized by the Khmer Rouge under phase 2 of the genocide, and they achieved this status once again after the Vietnamese invasion brought phase 2 of the genocide to an end (p287).
We need not tarry over the argument when it is offered by those who tolerate or applaud murderous agression when it suits their ends: the Indonesian invasion of Timor, the "liberation" of Lebanon by Israeli forces in 1982, or the "defense of South Vietnam" to mention a few obvious cases (p288).

Phase 3 at home: the great silence and the hidden potency of the left

"There was silence in the mid-1970s during the mass murders by the Khmer Rouge." – Floyd Abrams.
This was ast at ime when Jimmy Carter branded Pol Pot"the world's worst violator of human rights. That there was "silence" over Pol Pot atrocities was also an insistent claim right at the peak of the bitter outrage over Pol Pot genocide (p289).
Each of these themes – the "silence" of the West, the defense of Pol Pot by Western intellecutuals is unequivocally refuted by massive evidence that is well known, although ignored, b y the mobilized intellectual culture (p289).
The facts are radically different, but the idea that the west ignores Communist atrocities while agonizing over its own is far more appealing to the Western conscience. We are led to believe that the American left silenced the entire West during the Pol Pot period (p293).

Summary

During phase 1 – the American invasion, refugee testimony was considered uninteresting. This phase does not enter the record as a "holocaust" or an exercise in "genocide". There was massive outrage about

phase 2 – the Khmer Rouge rule when the death toll was well below that of phase 1. The subsequent U.S. support for Pol Pot aroused little notice (p295).

It is alleged that “left-wing skepticism” so dominated Western opinion and governements that there was silence throughout the Khmer Rouge period. The wide acceptance of this thesis counts as yet another example of how readily the most implausible contentions can become doctrine, as long as they are serviceable to America (p295).

The relief effort in 1979-80 did succeed in aiding cambodians in distress, but it also sustained the Pol Pot forces and thereby impeded Cambodia’s recovery , and perhaps its independence.

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Conclusions

Our concern in this book has been to inquire into the relation between image and reality. The media does not enable the pubic to assert meaningful co ntrol over the political process by providing them with the I nformation needed for the intelligent discharge of political responsibilities (p298).

The societal purpose of the media is to inculcate and defend the economic, social, and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state. The media serve this prupose by keeping debate within the bounds of acceptable premises (p298).

Some say that the media have gone too far – that they must be curbed if democracy is to survive. But the media is subordinate to the state propaganda system. The major scandal of Watergate as portrayed in the mainstream media was that the Nixon administration sent a collection of petty criminals to break into the Democratic party headquarters, for reasons that remain obscure (p299).

The Democratic party represents powerful domestic interests, solidly based in the business community. Nixon's actions w ere therefore a scandal. The socialsist workers party, a legal political party, represents no powerful interests. Therefore, t here was no scandal when it was revealed that the FBI had been disrupting its activities by illegal break-ins and other measures for a decade (p299).

These covert and illegal programs were reveealed in court cases and elsewhere during the watergate period, but they never entered the congressional proceedings and received only limited media attention (p300).

Even the complicity of the FBI in the police assassination of a Black Panther organizer in Chicago was not a scandal, in marked contrast to Nixon's "enemies list", which identified powerful people who were denigrated in private but suffered no consequences (p300).

Powerful groups are capable of defending themselves, not surprisingly; and by media s tandards, it is a scandal when their position and rights are threatened. By contrast, as long as illegalitites and violations of democratic substance are confined to marginal groups or distant victims of U.S. military attack, media opposition is mu ted or absent altogether (p300).

This is why Nixon could go so far, lulled into a false sense of security precisely because the watchdog only barked when he began to threaten the privileged (p300).

The sponsorship and support of state terror that cost some 200,000 lives in Central America in the preceding decade was not the subject of congressional inquiries or media concern. These actions were conducted in accord with an elite consensus, and they received s teady media support, as we reviewed in the fate of worthy and unworthy victims (p300).

In the case of the Vietnam War as well, even those who condemn the media for their alleged adversarial stance acknowledge that they were almost universally supportive of U.S. policy until after large numbers of U.S. troops had been engaged in the "intervention" in South Vietnam, heavy casualties had been taken, huge dollar sums had been spent, and elite protest surfaced on grounds of threats to elite interests (p301).

Only then did elements of the media undertake qualified reassessments of the "cost-benefit" trade-off.

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But during the period of growing involvement that eventually made extrication difficult, the watchdog actually encouraged the burglar to make himself at home in a distant land, and to bomb and destroy it with abandon (p301).

The very examples offered in praise of the media for their independence, or criticism of their excessive zeal, illustrate exactly the opposite. Contrary to the usual image of an "adversary press" boldly attacking a pitiful executive giant, the media's lack of interest in the illegalities of the executive branch have regularly prmitted and even encouraged ever larger violations of law (p301).

The existing level of media subordination to state authority is often deemed unsatisfactory by critics. Thus, Freedom House and others who are co ncerned to protect state authority from an intrusive public condemn the media for lack of sufficient enthusiasm in supporting official crusades, and even the limited challenge to established authority during the Vietnam War and the watergate period aroused concerns over the excessive power of the media (p301).

Quite commonly, the slight opening occassionally granted to dissent is considered far too dangerous to permit. This prception sometimes even takes the form of a paranoid vision of left-wing power that sweeps all in its path (p301).

In reality, there was a huge chorus of protest over Khmer Rouge atrocities, which reached an extraordinary level of fabrication and deceit. A propaganda model provides a ready explanation for this quite typical dichotomous treatment (p302).

Atrocities by the Khmer Rouge could be attributed to the communist emeny and valuable propaganda points could be scored, although nothing useful could be d one, or was even proposed, for the Cambodian victims (p302).

The image of communist monsters would also be useful for subsequent U.S. participation in terror and violence, as in its crusades in Central America and shortly after. In El Salvador, the United States backed the murderous junta in its struggle against what was depicted as "the Pol Pot left" (p302).

The utility of the show of outrage over Pol Pot atrocities is evident from the way the fate of these worthy victims was immediately exploited to justify U.S. organization of atrocities, that, in fact, do merit comparison with Pol Pot (p302).

Atrocities in East Timor, however, have no such utilitarian function; quite the opposite. These atrocities were carried out byour Indonesian client, so that the United States could readily have acted to reduce or terminate them (p302).

But attention to the Indonesian invasion would have embarrassed a loyal ally and quickly disclosed the crucial role of the United States in providing military aid and diplomatic support for the aggression and slaughter. The mass media – and the intellectual community generally, therefore channeled their benevolent impulses elsewhere to Cambodia, not Timor (p302).

The U.S.j media do not function in the manner of the propaganda system of a totalitarian state. Rather, theypermit, indeed, encourage spirited debate, criticism and dissent, as long as these remain faithfully within the system of presuppositions and principles that constitute an elite consensus, a system so powerful as to be internalized largely without awareness (p302).

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No one instructed the media to focus on Cambodia and ignore East Timor. They gravitated naturally to the Khmer Rouge and discussed hem freely – just as they naturally suppressed information on Indonesian atrocities in East Timor and U.S. responsiblility for the aggression and massacres (p303).
In this process, the media provided neither facts nor analyses that would have enabled the public to understand the issues or the bases of government policies toward Cambodia and Timor, and they thereby assured that the public could not exert any meaningful influence on the decisions that were made (p303).
In these cases, as in numerous others, th e public was managed and mobilized from above, by means of the media's highly selective messages and evasions. As noted by media analyst W. Lance Bennett "The public is exposed to powerful persuasive messages from above and is unable to communicate meaningfully through the media in response tho these messages" (p303).
"Leaders have usurped enormous amounts of political poer and reduced popular control over the political system by using the media to generate support, compliance, and just plain confusion among the public" (p303).
Another media analyst, Ben Bagdikian, observes that the institutional bias of the private mass media "does not merely protect the corporate system. It robs the public of a chance to understand the real world". That conclusion is well supported by the evidence (p303).
In essence, the private media are major corporations selling a product – readers and audiences to other businesses – advertisers. The national media would be failing to meet their elite audience's needs if they did not present a tolerably realistic portrayal of the world. But their "societal purpose" also requires that the media's interpretation of the world reflect the interests and concerns of the sellers, the buyers and the governmental and private institutions dominated by these groups (p303).
A propaganda model also helps us to understand how media personnel adapt, and are adapted, to systematic demands. Given the imperitives of corporate organization and the workings of the various filters, conformity to the needs and interests of provileged sectors is essential to success (p304).
In the media, as in other major institutions, those who do not display the requisite values and perspectives will be regarded as "irresponsible", "ideological", or otherwise aberrant, and will tend to fall by the way side. While there may be a small number of exceptions, the pattern is pervasive, and expected (p304).
Those who adapt, perhaps quite honestly, will then be free to express themselves with little managerial control, and they will be able to assert that they perceive no pressures to conform. The media are indeed free – for those who adopt the principles required for their "societal purpose" (p304).
The norm is a belief that freedom prevails, which is true for those who have internalized the required values and perspectives (p304).
We can readily understand why Guatemalan reporters do not report the atrocities of the 1980s; some fifty corpses dramatically illustrate the costs of deviance from authority on the part of independent journalists. To explain why American reporters avoid such topics, requires further explanation (p304).
A propaganda model provides a basis for understanding this pervasive phenomenon. The humanity and professional integrity of journalists often leads them in directions that are unacceptable in the

ideological institutions. One should not underestimate the psychological burden of suppressing obvous truths and maintaining the required doctrines of benevolance, good intentions, injured innocence and so on, in the fact of overwhelming evidence (p305).

The resulting tensions sometimes find limited expression, but more often they are suppressed either consciously or unconsciously, with the help of belief systems that permit the pursuit of narrow interest, whatever the facts (p305).

We find an overwhelming wish to think well of ourselves, our institutions and our leaders. We see ourselves as basically good and decent in personal life, so it must be that our institutions function in accordance with the same benevolent intent (p305).

The patriotic premise is reinforced by the belief system that "we the people" rule, a central principle of the system of indoctrination from early childhood, but also one with little merit, as an analysis of the social and political system will quickly reveal (p305).

If one chooses to denounce Qaddafi, or the Sandinistas, or the PLO, or the Soviet Union, no credible evi dence is required. The same is true if one repeats conventional doctrines about our own society and its behavior – say, that the U.S. government is dedicated to our traditional noble commitment to democracy and human rights (p305).

One has to work hard, to produce evidence that is credible, to construct serious arguments, to present extensive documentation – all tasks that are superflouous as long as one remains within the presuppositional framework of doctrinal consensus (p305).

It is small wonder that few are willing to undertake the effort, quite apart from the rewards that accrue to conformity and the costs of honest dissidence. There are other considerations that tend to induce obedience. A journalist or commentator who does not want to have to work too hard can survive, even gain respectability, by publishing information from standard sources (p305).

The technical structure of the media virtually compels adherence to conventional thoughts; nothing else can be expressed between two commercials, or in seven hundred words, w othout the appearance of absurdity (p305).

The critic must also be prepared to face a defamation apparatus against which there is little recourse. The result is a powerful system of induced conformity to the needs of privilage and power. The mass media in the United States are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without significant overt coercion (p306).

This propaganda system has become even more efficient in recent decades with the rise of the national television networks, g reater mass-media concentration, right-wing pressures on public radio and television, and the growth in scope and sophistication of public relations and news management (p306).

The system is not all-powerful, however. Government and elite domination of the media have not succeeded in overcoming the Vietnam s yndrom and public hostility to direct U .S. involvement in the destabilization and overthrow of foreign governments (p306).

A massive Reagan-era disinformation and propaganda effort did succeed in its major aims of mobilizing support for the U.S. terror states. They eliminated from Congress and the mass media all controversy

beyond tactical debate over the means that should be employed to return Nicaragua to the “Central American mode” and “contain” its “aggressiveness” in attempting to defend itself from a murderous and destructive U.S. assault on all fronts (p306).

But it failed to win public support even for proxy army warfare against Nicaragua, and the proxy war accompanied by embargo and other pressures succeeded in restoring the “Central American mode” of misery and suffering in Nicaragua (p306).

The partial failures of the well organized and extensive state propaganda effort, and the simultaneous rise of an active grass-roots oppositional movement was crucial in making an outright U.S. invasion of Nicaragua unfeasible and driving he state underground, to illegal clandestine operations that could be better concealed from the domestic population – with, in fact, consideralbe media complicity (p307).

While there have been important structural changes centralizing and strenghtening the propaganda system, there have been counterforces at work with a potential for broader access. The rise of cable and satellite communications has weakened the power of the network oligopoly and retains a potential for enhanced local-group access (p307).

There are already some 3,000 public-access channels in use in the United States, offering 20,000 hours of locally produced programs per week. Grass-roots and public-interest organizations need to recognize and try to avail themselves of these media opportunities (p307).

Local nonprofit radio and television stations also provide an opportunity for direct media access that has been underutilized in the United States. The potential value of noncommercial radio can be perceived in sections of the country where stations such as Pacifica Radio offer a view of the world, depth of coverage, and scope of discussion and debate that is generally excluded from the major media (p307).

The steady commercialization of publically owned airwaves should be vigorously opposed. The organization and self-education of grops in the community and workplace, and their networking and activism, continue to be the fundamental elements in steps toward he democratization of or social life and any meaningful social change (p307).

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